

Safety Net



Resources to Protect Your
Family from Pornography



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Family Safety Checklist

- ☐ Place computers in high-traffic areas of home
- ☐ Install a filtering program on all computers and phones (e.g., Mobicip Safe Browser for iOS devices)
- ☐ Activate parental controls on all computers
- ☐ Password block TV channels that often have pornographic content
- ☐ Teach family members about the dangers of pornography
- ☐ Disable browsers on mobile devices of youth
- ☐ Implement the Clean & Safe Media Pledge
- ☐ Establish a “curfew” after which no one uses the Internet for the remainder of the night

Family Action Items



OUR Clean & Safe Media PLEDGE

As a family, we commit to making clean and safe media choices in order to maintain our integrity to our standards and to keep our home a happy and healthy place to be.

We will do this by

1. Selecting books, web sites, music, magazines, activities, and/or movies that are in harmony with our family values.
2. Being kind to ourselves and to others by not posting or forwarding anything that could cause hurt, embarrassment, or offense. If we receive a text, e-mail, or post that makes us feel uncomfortable, sad, or scared, we will tell a parent right away.
3. Showing respect for our body and others' bodies by not looking at or posting nude or otherwise inappropriate images. If we accidentally come across questionable material, we will tell a parent right away.
4. Protecting identifying information by not posting phone numbers, addresses, or personal information in places where they can be seen by strangers. If we are unsure, we will ask a parent before posting personal information.
5. Never meeting up with someone we have met online unless a parent knows exactly where we are and someone accompanies us.
6. Limiting our media use when it is late at night or we are home alone.

Date: _____

Family Signatures:

Internet Safety

Individuals and parents can do many things to safeguard their homes from the harmful influences found on the Internet. While there is no foolproof system, some simple steps can help reduce the risk of family members seeing pornographic materials on the Internet.

1. Place computers in high-traffic areas of the home. Kitchens, family rooms, and studies usually have the most traffic. Because these rooms usually don't have doors, they are typically less secluded than bedrooms. Position computer monitors so the screen faces out for public view.
2. Install a filtering program, and learn its features and how to use it. Good filtering programs allow you to view a history of which sites (including chat rooms) have been visited and when, as well as a record of incoming and outgoing e-mails. Information on filtering programs can be found on Internet sites such as www.internetfilterreview.com. (NOTE: Those who are determined to view pornographic materials will find a way. The ultimate filter are the individuals themselves. It is their decision to avoid and turn away from all types of pornography).
3. Teach family members about the dangers of Internet pornography, including how to escape if an inappropriate site is accidentally accessed. This usually involves shutting down the entire system.
4. Teach family members to tell parents if they encounter any form of pornography while on the computer. This will help reduce the fear or shame of accidental exposure. It also serves to open discussion about the dangers of pornography.
5. Teach family members to use the Internet for a specific purpose only. Aimless surfing makes it easier to wander onto inappropriate sites.
6. Instant messaging is a cost-effective, easy way to communicate with family and close friends. However, teach family members to avoid public chat rooms, bulletin boards, or unfamiliar areas on the Internet. Such places present an unnecessary risk for children and adults.
7. Teach children not to share any personal information online without parental knowledge and permission. Many predators pose as children to gain access and information that may put children at risk.
8. Educate yourself about your computer and how the Internet works.
9. Be aware of what your children's school and public library policies are regarding Internet use and accessibility.
10. Teach family members to never open e-mail from someone they don't know.

The Internet is a wonderful tool and resource for families, but caution must be exercised in order to protect families and individuals from the potential dangers that are present online.

Provided by LDS Family Services

Action Items for Protecting our Children from Pornography's Influence

1. Teach healthy sexuality in a layered, step-wise manner throughout a child's development. It is best if both the mother and father are involved in teaching male and female children.
2. Teach children anatomically correct names for parts of the body.
3. Back your concerns up with actions (In a recent study of 2000+ parents, 84% of parents were concerned about media in their home, but only 27% had taken specific actions to protect their children).
4. Communicate expectations and values around media use, avoidance of pornography (be sure to define it), virtual citizenship, etc.
5. Implement a family media pledge (see The Clean & Safe Media Pledge).
6. Help children become media literate by teaching them how to discern and interpret media messages (What is the message that is being conveyed? Is the message congruent with family standards? Whose agenda is being presented? What is their goal? Who is the message aimed at? How is the human body being portrayed and why? How do you feel when you see/hear this message?).
7. Share our own uplifting and challenging media experiences with our children.
8. Help our children know how to deal with boredom, anger, stress, loneliness and sexual feelings in constructive ways. These are common triggers for pornography problems.
9. Strive to maintain an open, nurturing and engaged relationship with our children.
10. Hold regular family meetings and integrate this topic into discussions when related subjects arise (e.g., integrity, respect, standards).
11. Reclaim the word 'adult' as something ennobling and worthy of respect (e.g., say "sexually explicit material" vs. "adult material" or "adult store").
12. Hold regular one-on-one father discussions. A strong and open relationship with a father is a known buffer against pornography use.
13. As a family, brainstorm practical "fire drills" for when encounters with inappropriate media arise (e.g., change scenery/situation; go find a family member or friend to be with; identify needs and how to meet them in healthy ways).

14. Establish media guidelines as a family (what to watch, read, or listen to; what to avoid; and why).
18. Perform a media inventory in your home (Review movies, Internet use, magazines, books, music and images. Honestly assess if there is anything in your home, car, office, cell phone or computer that could be dangerous for you or members of your family. If there is, discard these items as soon as possible.).
19. Set strict guidelines around gaming, especially online gaming (the pornography and gaming industry are close cousins and work together to groom young/future consumers).
20. Model using appropriate media - walk the talk!
21. Implement some technology-free zones or blocks of time (e.g., during dinner or while driving together).
22. Teach and model empathy and viewing/treating people as whole beings.
23. Install filtering software on computers and keep it current.
24. Activate parental controls on all media devices in your home.
25. Model positive social skills and being present with people.
26. Co-pilot Internet use with young children.
27. Share technological skills and safety tips with one another (children with parents and vice versa).

Action Items for Protecting Marriages from Pornography's Influence

1. Ensure you are unified in your understanding and definition of what pornography is.
2. If you are ever in doubt about the impact a particular behavior or choice will have on your spouse or marriage, ask your partner. The answer usually becomes crystal clear very quickly!
3. Establish an 'exposure rule' (e.g., within 24 hours of being accidentally exposed to sexually explicit content, share that experience with your partner and debrief it. Don't let images fester).
4. Clarify boundaries around contact with members of the opposite sex (e.g., on and offline; social networking sites, work, socially, Church, etc.).
5. Strive to articulate sexual needs and preferences with clarity, sensitivity, respect and maturity.
6. As a couple, develop safety precautions for business/solo travel and honor them (www.cleanhotels.com is a helpful resource for business and family travel).
7. Make your marital friendship and relationship a top priority in your life.
8. Establish media guidelines for your relationship.
9. As a couple, clarify the role and nature of marital intimacy in your relationship. If necessary, seek professional help to negotiate differences that are causing strain on your marriage.
10. Ask questions of one another. *For example, questions like:*
 - a. When was the first time you were exposed to pornography and what were the circumstances surrounding that exposure?
 - b. Have you ever intentionally sought out sexually explicit material? If yes, when was the last time?
 - c. What are we each doing to protect ourselves from inappropriate media?
 - d. If either one of us ever had an issue with pornography in the future, which steps would we agree to take in order to get help?
 - e. Are there any media triggers/weaknesses that you have that I should be aware of?
 - f. How can we protect our marriage from evil influences?
 - g. What is it like to be married to me?

- h. What could I be doing to strengthen the trust and connection in our relationship?
11. Date regularly.
 12. If you are struggling with pornography use, or another form of sexual acting out, seek the help of qualified professionals (including medical doctors) and disclose this problem to your spouse as soon as possible. In general, marriages have a better prognosis when a partner discloses this issue versus having a spouse discover it on his/her own.
 13. Identify positive marriage role models that you and your spouse can learn from and emulate.

THE DANGEROUS CLIFF

A Family Discussion Guide
About Internet Safety and Pornography



Note to Parents:

The primary purpose of this guide is to help educate family members about the growing threat of pornography which, according to some accounts, has become more than a 100 billion dollar industry and is rapidly growing.

The result? Porn addiction and the destruction of families. 55% of divorces are attributed to the use of pornography.

This material can be used for several discussions and should be sensitively adapted to the ages and maturity of your children. Although most young people have been exposed to unwholesome and distasteful—even sexually explicit—matter on TV, the internet, books, magazines, and other media, it is suggested that you use discretion as you discuss these problems with very young children so as not to arouse undesired curiosity.

DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE:

To teach family members about online safety and the dangers and risks associated with the improper use of media

SUGGESTION:
BEGIN YOUR DISCUSSION BY READING THE FOLLOWING POEM
by Joseph Malines



‘Twas a dangerous cliff,
as they freely confessed,
Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant,
But over its terrible edge there had slipped,
A duke and full many a peasant.

So the people said something
would have to be done,
But their projects did not at all tally.
Some said, "Put a fence around the edge of the cliff,"
Some. "An ambulance down in the valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day,
For it spread through the neighboring city,
A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
But each heart became moved with pity,



For those who slipped over that dangerous cliff;
And the dwellers on highway and alley
Gave pounds and gave pence not to put up a fence, but an ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old sage remarked, "It's a marvel to me
That people give far more attention To repairing the results than stopping the cause, When they'd
much better aim at prevention. "

Let us stop at its source all this hurt," cried he. "Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally.
If the cliff we will fence, we might almost dispense With the ambulance
down in the valley."

Ask:

What are some of the cliffs in life? *Answers might include extreme sports, unsafe driving, over indulging on food, dishonesty, pornography, substance abuse, etc.*



Point out that while the electronic and printed media are great resources in our lives, they also contain dangerous cliffs that can inflict serious harm.

Ask:

What are some examples of dangerous cliffs in the media? *Answers might include vulgar e-mail and cell phone messages, inappropriate movies and videos.*

Ask:

Why are these hazardous to our emotional and temporal welfare and how can we fence them out of our lives? *Hazard answers likely would include pornography addiction and attracting predators.*

Fencing answers could include following the counsel of parents, clergy, other trusted leaders/friends, and placing filters on the media.

Using the succeeding “Helps” pages as resource material, discuss the following topics and their risks:

- **Social Networking:**

The use of a dedicated Web site to communicate informally with other members of the site, by posting messages, photographs, etc.

- **Cyberbullying:**

The use of the Internet and related technologies to harm other people, in a deliberate, repeated and hostile manner.

- **Gaming:**

The playing of computer and video games.

- **Online Predators:**

Adult Internet users who exploit vulnerable children or teens, usually for sexual or other abusive purposes.

- **Sexting:**

Sending of sexually explicit photos, images, text messages, or e-mails by using a cell phone or other mobile device.

- **Internet Privacy:**

The ability to control the information one reveals about himself/herself and the storing and displaying of information

- **Pornography or “porn”:**

Printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity

Helps:

The following articles address some of today's dangers and include ideas to assist families.

Keeping Kids Socially Safe Online

by Andrea Eldridge, ContentWatch

Monitoring and Guiding Kids' Use of Social Media

Nowadays, if you've got kids old enough to walk and talk, you've got kids old enough to use the Internet and they're probably better at it than you are. Modern kids grow up with



technology interwoven into most major aspects of their lives - entertainment, education, and, yes, even social relationships.

It used to be easy to meet your child's friends (and their parents) when they lived across the street, but what do you do when they live halfway across the world or your child doesn't even know them by their real name? There are a few common-sense ways to make sure that your child's online social interactions are building safe, respectful friendships and not getting

them into trouble, and fortunately, many of the same old rules we learned as children still apply.

Don't Talk to Strangers: Sites like Facebook are for social networking, meaning that most of the people your child is meeting will be real-life friends and friends of real-life friends. Teach your kids to be very cautious about who they "friend" - you can even scan their "friends list" to see notations of how many "mutual friends" each person shares with your child - if the person they are friending doesn't know any of their other friends, talk to your child about who that person is and how your child met them. Your child's online friends should be just like their real-world friends - they should be willing to let you "meet them."

If You Can't Say Anything Nice...:

Make sure your kids understand that their online speech is just as real and lasting as anything they would say to someone in person. Some kids will post comments online that they would never say to a person's face, because of the greater feeling of anonymity. Explain to your children that what they write online is sometimes even more permanent than what they say out loud, because other people can easily copy and "repeat it."

Hold Hands When Crossing the Street: Ideally, young children's initial online activity should be at the family computer, with a parent by their side. Just as you spend time teaching your child to navigate the real world safely,

you, as a modern parent, must also spend time teaching your child to navigate the digital world safely. Set online safety rules like “Don’t give your personal information and “Don’t click on offers for FREE stuff and make sure your child can repeat these rules, just like you’d watch them to see that they’ve learned to look both ways before crossing.

Listen to the Babysitter: Internet monitoring programs like NetNanny will allow you to set all sorts of parental filters for your children’s Internet access, as well as giving you detailed reports of how and when your child is accessing social media (facebook, twitter, etc.). To prevent your kids trying to find ways around the filters, it helps if they understand that the program is like an online babysitter - it’s there to enforce the rules the parents set while the parents are away, and it’s there to help the child while they are still learning to “babysit themselves. Your kids should know that they can come talk to you about any “rules (filters) you have set and why.

The modern child’s life may be more technology-gearred than most parents are comfortable with, but with good communication, clear boundaries, and a set of common-sense rules, you can teach your child to navigate the online world as safely and successfully as the real world.

Facebook Friendship Led to Sexual Assault

by Allen Warner, ContentWatch



A Facebook friend request sent on a cold day in February 2011 would begin a devastating chain of assaults for a teenage girl.

A volunteer firefighter, Bo Brady Burdick, 20, sent a friend request to a girl he didn't know. She accepted. After a few months of Facebook messaging, they exchanged phone numbers and began text messaging each other. After pressure from Burdick, they exchanged nude photos of themselves. She is 13 years old.

Finally in June, Burdick traveled from his Utah home to visit the girl in Idaho. It was during this visit that he sexually assaulted her and several times after that.

Situations like this should be a call of action for parents. If this girl had never allowed a stranger to be her "friend", she wouldn't have been assaulted 4+ times.

Parents need to be more aware of what their children do online and develop a protective instinct. The days of "that will never happen to MY children" are over.

Installing filtering software is a great way to begin the battle against predators and unwanted exposure of inappropriate things. Another method is to personally monitor your child's friend requests. Do you know what your kids are doing on the internet? Do you know with whom they are friends? Be informed.

CyberBully Hotline Program for Schools

by Melody Zurawski, ContentWatch



The Cyberbully Hotline from Schoolreach is a communication tool that allows students to send anonymous voice or text messages to school officials to report bullying acts. These reports can be immediately responded to anonymously by school officials who provide support to help students effectively address each situation. It's a great program aimed at helping each child feel safe at school by doing something about bullying and online harassment of students.

Unfortunately, many schools lack the funding to offer this type of anti-bullying program. So to help implement their anonymous bullying reporting solution, The CyberBully Hotline has established a \$100,000 grant program for schools and districts.

So to help implement their anonymous bullying reporting solution, The CyberBully Hotline has established a \$100,000 grant program for schools and districts.

Schools and districts who apply for the grant must have greater than a 31 percent Free and Reduced Lunch rating and each participant chosen can receive up to \$2,500 to cover the cost of a 12-month CyberBully Hotline service period.

It's encouraging that more schools will now have the tools to help reduce and prevent cyberbullying. Still, keep in mind that teachers becoming involved should assist the ongoing efforts of parents in the home, not replace them. Parents should have parental control software in place at home that can help monitor for cyberbullying. Then if problems arise, take action and protect your child.

Gaming

Researchers believe that electronic games are associated with an increased risk of childhood obesity and, in some cases, can cause overuse injuries of the hand. Because players are almost always seated when playing electronic games, this could also increase the risk of developing muscle and joint problems such as back and neck pain and headaches.

Some research has shown that playing violent computer games and a large amount of game time can increase the risk of aggressive behavior in some children and can negatively affect performance at school. While computer or video games are fun and offer benefits such as improved spatial awareness, parents should keep in mind that moderation is the key to minimizing any risks.

Online Predators

“Online victimization of minors can include child grooming, requests to engage in sexual activities or discussions by an adult, unwanted exposure to sexual material (email with naked pictures, etc.), and online harassment, threats or other aggressive communications that are not sexual in nature but cause distress, fear or embarrassment.

Chat rooms, instant messaging, Internet forums, social networking sites, and even video game consoles have all been accused of attracting online predators.”

Parents Beware: Facebook Can Scare

by Russ Warner, ContentWatch

Seven months ago, one of our software quality assurance testers (I will call Michael) created a Facebook account for a fictional girl, Savannah, with a provocative photo in a bikini. Her Facebook profile says she's just turned 14 yrs old. The account is used for testing the integration of Net Nannywith Facebook and is not actively updated.

To satisfy curiosity, Savannah (or rather Michael) accepts all "friend" requests, and she's had almost 500 but Savannah never posts comments or replies to messages.

Within a few months, her Facebook wall was littered with inappropriate comments from "friends" and non-friends. She has received hundreds of private messages as well with vulgarity and sexual content. Sadly, many of her hundreds of "friends" are men in their 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's.

The moral of the story is that parents must be aware of their child's Facebook use because there are hundreds of potential "friends" looking to contact and lure a child into dark and scary places.

Be a parent. Get software tools to make your job easier to monitor facebook.



Russ Warner, CEO
Content Watch

Sexting Is (Still) Illegal

by Russ Warner, ContentWatch

Sending sexually explicit text messages ("sexting") is a crime in many states. When children or teens send sexually graphic images of themselves to others, it is considered child pornography.

An article authored by Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine provides substantial evidence of the rapid rate at which sexting has become popular among teens. Evidently, Caucasian kids love sexting, more than any other demographic. However, teens from all demographics are involved.

What causes some teens to be more engaged in this act of indecent exposure?

The law doesn't state that inappropriate sexual behavior must occur between an adult and a minor. Not completely defined, this law would cause several million children to be liable for the creation and distribution of child pornography. This issue causes lawmakers to seek for relaxed child pornography laws so as to not charge children and teens as pedophiles.

On a similar serious note, when sexting occurs, it's an indicator of sexual activity. Seventy-seven percent of girls and eighty-two percent of boys who send sext messages have had sexual relations.

Those most affected by sexting are girls. Ninety-five percent of girls said they were a "little bothered" by sexting requests and about thirty percent were bothered "a great deal" by the requests. On the contrary, boys seemed unaffected

by such requests. Fifty percent of boys didn't mind "at all" and less than five percent were bothered a great deal.

Socio-economic status had no significant effect on sexting tendencies. Thus, "sexting out of wedlock" seems to be the norm.

All parents should be actively involved in their child's online habits. Current laws regarding sexting can potentially cause significant emotional and financial strain on a family if child pornography charges are filed.



How does Pornography Affect Teens?

by Allen Warner, ContentWatch

In a recent news story, two teenagers came clean of their addictions; both suffer from pornography addiction.



One was a young man from Utah, 17, who said his experience with pornography addiction was a lonely time in his life. He began viewing pornographic images at a young age and couldn't stop throughout his high school experience until now. He felt isolated and trapped, as if he couldn't confide in anyone. He would lie to his parents, his relationships began to fail, and he felt alone. He said he felt he couldn't improve or even start new relationships with others because he felt he was lying to them by not being honest with his addiction.

The young woman, 22, from Texas revealed that her addiction to pornography, like many others, began when she was young. She said she would isolate herself because she hated what she was doing and hated that she couldn't stop viewing it. To many, porn is a man's problem. She discredits this idea with her personal experience with addiction. Her story is one of empowerment and courage for all addicts but especially for female addicts.

Both teens are advocates for an anti-porn campaign called "Fight the New Drug." The campaign seeks to educate teens on the effects of porn.

For many teens, porn is a way to deal with negative emotions. It provides a euphoric high that numbs away painful feelings. It's a "de-stressor" for many. Yet Matt Bulkley, a psychotherapist, believes we are just at the front end of the porn problem. He hypothesizes that in the next 5-10 years, a surge of porn addicts will appear. When the rising generation moves into adolescence, there will be a tragic epidemic of porn addiction, Bulkley says.

Both of these stories have common themes: pornography addiction affects teens in dramatic ways. It causes addicts to isolate themselves, become depressed and lonely, have poor school performance, and

oftentimes they begin lying.

However, another common thread is hope. These personal accounts demonstrate that addiction can be beaten. Many have overcome its brain-damaging effects and are free from the grips of pornography.

If we are going to battle this forthcoming epidemic, we must prepare. We must protect ourselves and the teenagers we know from unintentional exposure to risqué images. The young man in Utah has internet filters on his mobile device to block pornographic images; we, too, can install and use filtering systems. Take advantage of Google and Youtube's SafeSearch features and parental controls by others. Every step should be taken to prevent pornography addiction.

Pornography Addiction: It's like "Dating" Porn

by Russ Warner, ContentWatch



Research reveals that pornography viewing releases adrenalin and dopamine into the blood stream. In essence, adrenalin gives a physical "rush" and dopamine acts as a pain killer. This combination is powerfully addicting. Drug and alcohol addicts say that a pornography addiction is as bad—or worse—than a substance addiction.

More recent research also shows that something even more shocking occurs during pornography sessions. Scientists speculate that a hormone called oxytocin is also released.

The combination of dopamine and oxytocin acts as a “biochemical love potion” according to behavioral therapist Andrea Kuszewski. The end result: pornography viewing sessions can cause the addict to be more inclined to form an emotional attachment to their addiction of choice. And more interesting, pornography viewers don't have to actually have sexual relations in order to get those neurotransmitters firing.

Kuszewski says that when you watch porn, “you're bonding with it...and those chemicals make you want to keep coming back to have that feeling.”

In short, pornography addicts seem to develop a neurological attachment to pornography. They are, in essence, dating porn.

Pornography

Basics



The Basics

Common Misconceptions

First, let's start with a simple definition of what pornography is. Pornography is material that is sexually explicit and that has the primary intended purpose of sexual arousal. Pornography addiction is a sub-category of sexual addiction and is progressive. It typically starts out with occasionally looking at pictures of scantily dressed people and then progresses from soft-core to hard-core pornography. This progression can lead to acting out behaviors such as online and in-person emotional and sexual affairs, visiting strip clubs and soliciting prostitutes.

"You have a problem with pornography? Just make up your mind not to do it anymore, stick to your commitments, think pure thoughts . . ." is common advice. While all those suggestions are important spiritual activities, they do not provide a likelihood of curing a pornography problem because the issue does not stem merely from a lack of desire to quit. Pornography is a physical addiction that chemically alters the brain. To treat this problem, serious measures are required including a substantial amount of professional, outside help. If someone is addicted to alcohol, they would be strongly advised to seek [counseling](#) and immediately begin attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. It is essential to recognize that use of pornography, like alcohol, can lead to addiction. As with addiction to drugs or alcohol, it cannot be conquered through willpower alone.

A common misconception is that a compulsion to view pornography will disappear following marriage. While marriage may temporarily halt the use of pornography by disrupting the pattern of the addiction, the compulsion generally resurfaces and escalates. Pornography is often used as a way to deal with negative emotions and to cope with life's problems, just as alcohol or illicit drugs might be abused. Although pornography use is not as common among women, the number of women viewing pornography is increasing rapidly.

This is a BIG Problem

Pornography is a rampant problem in our society. Some studies suggest that 70 percent of men ages 18 to 24 visit pornography websites in a typical month. (<http://www.sync-blog.com/sync/2010/06/internet-porn-stats-should-parents-be-concerned.html>) Forty-seven percent of families in the United States say pornography is a problem in their home. (<http://www.safefamilies.org/sfStats.php>) A survey conducted in 2008 found that nearly nine out of ten (87%) young men and nearly one third (31%) of young women report using pornography. (Generation XXX: Pornography Acceptance and Use Among Emerging Adults) The average age at which children first see online pornography is eleven. (<http://www.healthymind.com/s-porn>) Although statistics are not specifically available for the LDS population, it is estimated they are similar.

Pornography use is almost always carefully hidden. Directly asking about pornography use can open discussions and help identify men and women who are struggling. Once the individual can admit to being addicted and talk about the



problem in a safe environment, the shame and guilt begin to dissipate. Likewise, the spouses and other loved ones of addicts have a need to discuss the problem openly with others.



Because pornography is so rampant, it is important to provide training and education even to those who may not currently be struggling. As pornography is discussed more openly, individuals will have the courage to step forward and seek help if needed, recognize current problems and be better equipped to handle future problems. Openness does not mean condoning behavior or lessening consequences. It means eliminating the secrecy surrounding this subject and helping people understand that the problem is widespread and needs to be addressed openly in an appropriate manner.

White Knuckle Abstinence versus Addiction Recovery

Recovery from pornography addiction is difficult, but definitely attainable. Those who are completely committed to doing what it takes to find and maintain recovery will be successful. Recovery involves:

- Desiring to recover and honestly admitting to others the magnitude of the problem
- Becoming educated about the nature of pornography addiction and the recovery process
- Creating a safe environment where triggers and temptations are less likely to occur
- Continued participation in a 12-Step recovery program
- Seeking professional counseling. This will usually include a mixture of individual counseling, couples therapy, and group counseling (at least eighteen months is typically required)
- Seeking spiritual help by counseling with an ecclesiastical leader

Abstinence is not the same as recovery. Abstinence involves going a period of time without viewing pornography. Recovery requires a life-style change and involves relearning healthy sexuality, resetting unhealthy expectations and establishing positive patterns of interaction with others. Additionally, recovering individuals must learn to manage emotions, stress, relationships, and other factors that underlie their addictive behaviors. They must learn to differentiate between lust and healthy love.

Just as an alcoholic can never consider himself to be cured, those who are addicted to pornography are always



susceptible to relapse and should take proactive measures to stay in recovery for the rest of their lives. With time, remaining in recovery becomes easier.

The following factors can be used to measure an addict's recovery:

- Is he completely honest, open and transparent in discussing his pornography problem—past and present—with his leaders, parents, spouse, or girlfriend?
- What has he done to facilitate his recovery? Did he fully disclose his problem, work the 12-Step program and get counseling?
- Does he acknowledge himself as an addict and continue to attend 12-Step meetings and work with a sponsor to maintain recovery?
- How long has he gone without viewing pornography? Has it been 7-12 months?
- Has he healed from the effects of pornography, addressed issues that led to pornography use and learned to deal with life in a more constructive manner?



The Effects of Pornography on the Spouse and Marriage

When a wife discovers her husband's pornography use, the emotions experienced are similar to the grieving process associated with the death of a loved one: shock, disbelief or denial, anger, depression and, finally, acceptance. Acknowledging, accepting and allowing those feelings to take their course are important. Pornography frequently changes the addict's personality, influences the way he treats others and causes an emotional distance from those around him. The spouse often feels betrayed, rejected, abandoned and

unimportant. Feelings of deep loneliness and responsibility for the addiction are almost universal. Anger at the addicted spouse and even toward God is common. "I did everything I was supposed to do. Is this what I get for it?" They may feel abandoned not only physically and emotionally, but also spiritually.

Pornography addicts frequently pressure their spouses to keep the issue private. This isolation compounds the downward spiral of unhealthy feelings and counter-productive behavior. Without appropriate help and counseling, the emotional, physical and spiritual health of the spouse will deteriorate.

Pornography use may eventually lead to divorce. Statistically, fifty-five percent of divorces are related to pornography. Nevertheless, a large number of couples are able to find recovery and healing through recognition of this addiction and by seeking appropriate help. Several factors influence the probability of healing the relationship:

- The addict willingly discloses the problem and is completely open and honest before he is caught
- The addict chooses to get appropriate help, including counseling and participation in a 12-Step program rather than assuming he can recover on his own
- The couple has realistic expectations. Change takes time and there will usually be relapses. With good counseling and support, however, these slips become less severe and less frequent
- Both the addict and the spouse get the counseling and support they need



Many counselors recommend not making any major life decisions for at least a year. Over time, trust can be rebuilt and the relationship can heal if both partners are willing to do their part.



Whether you are someone struggling with pornography use or a loved one of someone who is struggling, you need to find someone who you can talk honestly and openly with. In addition, regular meetings with a counselor are strongly recommended. (See The Basics: Counseling). Healing can begin, both for the addict and the loved one, when secrecy and shame are replaced with honesty, openness and humility.

For those Struggling with Pornography

One of the first steps along the pathway to recovery is coming out of hiding and speaking with another trusted individual about your behavior. Most people find it challenging to tell another about their pornography habits and other associated behaviors, but until you do, it is unlikely that you will make any real, lasting progress. Given the nature of addiction, it is generally impossible to actually quit your behavior without the assistance of others. Once you can admit and talk about the problem, the shame and guilt generally begin to dissipate. There is a peace and self-acceptance that comes from openly discussing your pornography behavior with other trusted individuals. Consider honestly discussing your behavior with a spouse, parent, religious leader or serious girlfriend/boyfriend.

For close relationships, such as a spouse or serious girlfriend/boyfriend, honest disclosure is not only important for recovery, but also for restoring trust and saving your relationship. You cannot hide your behavior forever. Eventually it will come out and it is much better to be upfront about your addiction initially than for your loved one to discover your behavior on their own at a later date. Talking to religious leaders, if available, is also important. Religious leaders provide an opportunity for individuals to openly confess their behavior, get spiritual encouragement and can offer added accountability.

Additionally, it is important to have someone you are accountable to that can help you when you feel the desire to view pornography. Start by finding someone you can trust, a parent, leader, close friend or other relative, and ask for help. Then find a sponsor, someone who has recovered from your addiction, and can help you overcome challenges you face on a day-to-day basis.

As you become open and honest about your behaviors and work the steps of recovery, progress will occur. Recovery is possible, but it takes work to break the chains of your addiction.



For Those Impacted by Another's Addiction



For spouses, girlfriends, parents and others who are impacted by the pornography addiction of another, it is important to find someone you can trust to talk with. Especially for spouses, there can be intense emotions upon discovering that your husband or wife is participating in pornography. Often times the individual viewing pornography will pressure their spouse not to tell anyone regarding their behavior. Keeping silent can create unnecessary emotional turmoil. It is important to be able to talk through the emotions you are experiencing. Find someone you trust. Helpful individuals may include a religious leader, parent, close friend, therapist, or sibling. Speaking with

a religious leader, if available, can be particularly useful in helping to put life in perspective and maintain spirituality.

Identify key individuals who:

1. Will keep confidences
2. Provide a safe place to talk
3. Will not negatively judge you or your loved one
4. Can offer some support and direction

Be respectful of any confidence that is shared with you by your loved one through not broadcasting the pain you may feel to all who will listen. Instead, confide in select individuals who can actually help and support you. Be respectful and discrete about whom you talk to, but make sure that you get the help that you need.

Why Counseling?

For those **viewing pornography**, therapy is an important component of recovery. Individuals frequently view pornography in part as a coping mechanism for other problems in life. By finding a qualified therapist that works well with your personality, individuals can better assess core issues and triggers that drive them to view pornography. Once these issues and triggers are identified, therapists can then help support individuals as they work to replace these addictive habits with healthy behaviors.

For **others closely associated** with those viewing pornography, such as **spouses, parents** and those in **serious dating relationships**, therapy can also be helpful. Many spouses and those in serious dating relationships express feelings of betrayal and other intense emotions upon learning of their partners' behaviors. Parents frequently express frustration and an inability to effectively handle this issue. Therapy can provide a safe place to sort through the emotions experienced and provide a professional perspective in making important decisions. For spouses and those seriously dating, attending therapy sessions with the person viewing pornography can also be effective.



Finding a qualified counselor

Finding a qualified counselor for pornography and sexual addiction is critical to the recovery process. Genuine commitment to on-going counseling from a qualified therapist is typically required for a minimum of 12 to 18 months for those who are addicted. It is also important for those closely impacted by the addiction of another to find qualified counseling. Since all individuals have unique personalities, however, even a qualified therapist may not be a good fit for you. It is important to find a therapist that works well with your personality.

The following questions may be helpful in finding a qualified therapist. If after seeing a therapist for 3-6 weeks you are finding therapy sessions unhelpful, you may consider looking for another therapist that works better with your personality.

When evaluating a therapist, some important considerations are:

- **What training has the therapist received in dealing with sexual behaviors and addictions?**

Therapists dealing with sexual addiction often need extensive training and education. You may want to ask the therapist if he or she is a member of a national organization for sexual addiction and if he or she has received any specific certification or training.

- **Does the therapist specialize in sexual addiction and how many years of experience do they have treating these problems?**

Good therapists specializing in other psychological problems may not be the best for treating sexual behavior.

- **Are counseling services provided to the non-addicted spouse?**

Involvement of the non-addicted spouse in therapy is often important for their wellbeing and also that of the marriage.

- **Does the therapist or clinic provide group therapy?**

Experience has shown that recovery is enhanced when the individuals and couples participate in group therapy.

- **What does the therapist believe the effects of viewing pornography are?**

Therapists often have varying opinions regarding whether pornography and engaging in related activities is problematic behavior. Ensure the therapist you are seeing shares your beliefs and value system.

- **Does the therapist believe that pornography use can be classified as an addiction?**

If a therapist does not believe pornography is addictive, then their method of treating the behavior is likely to be substantially different. Current research demonstrates that the changes in the brain caused by pornography viewing are very similar to the changes in the brain caused by addictive drugs and alcohol.

- **What steps are considered necessary to recover?**

Some therapists do not believe recovery is possible, or do not exhibit a strong understanding of what recovery requires.

- **How does the therapist define “sobriety” and measure success in treating those who view pornography?**

Discovering how a therapist defines sobriety and measures success can also help you gauge the effectiveness of treatment. Sobriety is not having sex with self or others, other than your spouse. Recovery involves being totally honest and coming out of hiding, a life style change to create a pornography free life, working with a qualified counselor, working with your bishop, participating in a 12-step recovery program. It takes 12 - 18 months to gain solid recovery.



12-Step Programs

Why Join a 12-Step Group? Committing to participate in a 12-Step program is a critical element of the recovery process. It is usually when addicts finally admit that they are powerless to change on their own and become willing to join a 12-Step program that they find real recovery. 12-Step programs are non-professional, often religious non-profit groups.

Programs provide (a) specific boundaries and recovery plans, (b) accountability to a sponsor and regular reporting at group meetings, (c) support and encouragement, (d) a step-by-step process for pursuing recovery and making life changes, and (e) an emphasis on the need to turn to a Higher Power for help and intervention. The “12 Steps of Recovery” set forth the process individuals follow to make the spiritual and mental changes that enable them to find

and maintain long-term recovery. The steps were originally written and experienced by members of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.



*For those **viewing pornography**, many commit to stop again and again. They talk to others, read material, participate in programs and even see a therapist, only to relapse after days, weeks, months or even years of not viewing pornography. The element that is generally missing, and often most resisted by addicts, is fully committing to attend a 12-step program and work the steps of recovery. Ironically, those who gain long-term recovery frequently indicate that fully working the 12-step program was the most important step in their recovery. The White Book, written Sexaholics Anonymous, explains that “[n]o one seems able to stay sober and progress in recovery without [the 12-steps], though some try. For most of us, without associating in some way with other recovering individuals, there is no*

lasting sobriety and none of the fringe benefits of recovery, growth, freedom, and joy. We don’t try to explain this; it is simply a fact.” (page 63 of White book).

The “crucial change in attitude began when we admitted that our habit had us whipped” and “[w]e came to 12-step meetings[.]”

Productive participation in a 12-Step group initially requires attending several meetings per week, working the 12 Steps daily and regularly reporting to a sponsor. A sponsor is someone who has worked the 12 Steps, found recovery and is willing to serve as a mentor. Their experience uniquely qualifies them to help others suffering from the same addiction. They promote accountability, give hope and offer specific guidance on how to avoid relapses.

Effective groups will have:

- Regular meetings several times a week conducted by someone who has recovered from that specific addiction
- Meetings with a reasonable number of people who have found healing and recovery and can share their experience, strength and hope
- Available sponsors who are qualified to guide newcomers through the recovery process
- Literature specific to the addiction and a methodology for working the steps
- A definition of sobriety that conforms to the value system of the individual seeking help



If, after attending several meetings and working the program, the individual seeking help does not feel connected to the group, he should consider looking for a different 12-Step program. Many have found that attending SA and S-Anon meetings can be helpful.

Those who attend SA or S-Anon groups and gain experience, sobriety and recovery can then return and share their experience, strength and hope with those in Family Support group meetings.

Information for Loved Ones of Those Addicted to Pornography

How has my loved one's addiction affected me? Those impacted by the addiction of another need to realize that they have been harmed and deeply affected by the addiction of their loved one. It is not a simple thing to heal from these wounds. There are 12-step meetings specifically for the loved ones of addicts. These meetings are a place where those closely associated with addicts can come to terms with their feelings of frustration, hurt, anger, confusion, depression and perceived powerless. You may feel that there is nothing you can do to change your



circumstances or you may be trying to facilitate your loved one's recovery. Many have found the most critical component of sorting through these emotions, identifying specific actions that can appropriately be taken and finding balance and peace in life on a day-to-day basis is a 12-step support group.

The 12-step program will give you the strength you need to change by helping you gain support from others, establish specific boundaries, provide accountability through a sponsor and help you apply 12 important steps or principles that will help you succeed.

Occasional Use Versus Addiction

An important question when discussing pornography use is the debate concerning where the line between occasional use and addiction should be drawn. Here are some things to ask about occasional use of pornography.

Why am I looking at pornography? Some answers to this are, “I love the rush I feel when I view pornography,” “I find it helps relieve anxiety, boredom, depression, loneliness.” Some questions worth asking yourself include:

- Is pornography a good way to meet your emotional needs. Everything it portrays is a lie – do you see any danger here?
- Do you justify actions by simply stating that you have a strong curiosity about what’s out there?
- Are you okay with the way women and sexuality are portrayed in pornography?
- Pornography is fake and ignores honest emotion and healthy intimacy. Many people have found this creates a real conflict and they become less able to connect with friends and family - have you considered that this could happen to you?
- Are you okay with the possibility that I could become addicted?
- Are you watching pornography because it fills a need for you? This is the way addictions start.
- Do you intend to use pornography for your whole life - after you are married, when you have children?
- Because pornography presents lies, distortions, and miss-programs your brain, why are you viewing it at all?

Pornography presents a false, deceptive portrayal of sexuality and relationships. The information you get from viewing pornography messes up your ability to have healthy relationships. Dr. Jill Manning explained the problem with pornography use. She stated, “Pornography use is not simply a habit, it is a mood altering, belief changing, relationship damaging, addiction forming, socially harmful, spiritually deadening and life crippling practice . . .”

The bottom line is that if you are viewing pornography, you are doing something which does not benefit you. It messes up your thinking, makes you vulnerable to a really destructive addiction, and changes the way you treat friends and family. Why would you do that? And if you have quit and then gone back to viewing pornography, that is the major indication of addiction.

Frequently Asked Questions about Pornography

1. What is pornography?

Pornography is “material that is sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal.” It may depict nudity or sexual behavior, and includes written materials such as romance novels, photographs, movies, electronic images, video games, internet chat rooms, erotic telephone conversations, music, or other media.

2. How is viewing pornography progressively addictive?

Dr. Victor Cline has explained the addictive process as follows:

In my experience as a sexual therapist, any individual who regularly masturbates to pornography is at risk of becoming, in time, a sexual addict, as well as conditioning himself into having a sexual deviancy and/or disturbing a bonded relationship with a spouse or girlfriend.

A frequent side effect is that it also dramatically reduces his capacity to love (that is, it results in a marked dissociation of sex from friendship, affection, caring, and other normal healthy emotions and traits which help marital relationships). His sexual side becomes in a sense dehumanized. Many of them develop an “alien ego state” (or dark side), whose core is antisocial lust, devoid of most values. In time, the “high” obtained from masturbating to pornography becomes more important than real life relationships....It makes no difference if one is an eminent physician, attorney, minister, athlete, corporate executive college president, unskilled laborer, or an average 15-year-old boy. All can be conditioned into deviancy. The process of masturbatory conditioning is inexorable and does not spontaneously remiss. The course of this illness may be slow and is nearly always hidden from view. It is usually a secret part of the man's life, and like a cancer, it keeps growing and spreading. It rarely ever reverses itself, and it is also very difficult to treat and heal. Denial on the part of the male addict and refusal to confront the problem are typical and predictable, and this almost always leads to marital or couple disharmony, sometimes divorce and sometimes the breaking up of other intimate

relationships. He has summarized the progression as follows:

Addiction. The person finds he compulsively views pornography.

Escalation. The addicted person seeks progressively harder core pornography to get the same effect.

Desensitization. Tolerance increases to progressively explicit material.

Acting Out Sexually. The person seeks to act out fantasies viewed in the pornography (prostitution, adultery, etc.).

3. What are the specifics of pornography and sexual addiction?

Discussing the specifics of pornography can be uncomfortable. However, it is important that priesthood leaders, parents, and spouses understand in general terms the varying levels of pornographic material and associated experiences so they know what specific questions to ask and what to be aware of. Soft-core pornography generally consists of models posing topless or nude, as is common in Playboy magazines. Hard-core porn involves images of people actually engaging in graphic sexual acts or poses. On-demand pornography is available on the internet for a cost, allowing viewers to specify the exact acts they want to see performed in front of the camera.

The sexual activity available at strip clubs varies greatly depending on state laws and the level of enforcement. At strip clubs, so-called lap dancing and other such activities may involve direct physical contact with private parts of the body. Some strip clubs have private rooms where simulation sex acts take place. As the sexual addiction progresses and escalates, addicts frequently become involved in activity with prostitutes and in other unbounded sexual encounters such as anonymous sex and one-night stands. The addicts' actions may eventually evolve into more deviant forms of sexual behavior such as the viewing of child pornography, sexual abuse of self or others, rape, and sex in the context of violence.

4. How big of a problem is pornography?

The following are statistics from various studies regarding pornography. Although more accurate information is needed, the following reflects the magnitude of the problem:

In 1997, approximately one out of every six Internet searches related to sex. Each day there are 23 to 60 million unique visitors to pornography websites. Revenues from pornography now exceed the combined revenues of all professional football, baseball, and basketball franchises.

Some 34,376,000 unique users (23.68% of all Internet users) visit pornography websites and view an average of 239 pornographic web pages each day.

By the end of 2004, 420 million pages of pornography existed on the internet. It is estimated that 13.97% of online pornography consumption is by children ages two to seventeen. Some 83% of youth watch pornography at home. Approximately 70% of youth ages fifteen to seventeen reported accidentally coming across pornography online, and 23% of those youth said this happens "very" or "somewhat" often.

Of all consumers of online pornography, 71.61% are male and 28.39% are female. Nearly 9 out of 10 (87%) young men and nearly one third (31%) of young women report viewing pornography. Forty million Americans regularly visit porn sites. Seventy percent of men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four visit porn sites in a typical month. The average age at which a child first sees online porn is eleven years old. In 1998, 45% of the Protestant clergy surveyed reported using pornography.

Forty-seven percent of families in the United States say pornography is a problem in their home. Every second, more than 28,000 individuals are looking at pornography on the internet. Pornography is a worldwide industry, generating \$97 billion annually. Every second consumers spend \$3,075.64 on pornography.

Nine out of ten children between the ages of eight and sixteen have viewed pornography on the internet, in most cases unintentionally. Every thirty-nine minutes, a new pornographic video is created in the United States. Twelve percent of the websites on the internet are pornographic (approximately 24,644,172).

5. Is pornography a problem for women?

While pornography use is currently not as common among women as it is for men, the number of women who view pornography is rapidly increasing. Seventy percent of new pornography websites are geared towards women. Pornography addiction in women frequently takes different forms than for men. For example, men tend to respond to visual images, while women initially tend to be more drawn to verbal and written forms of pornography such as graphic romance novels, explicit chat rooms, or online romantic role playing. Many women are drawn into social media relationships that can lead to the production of self-pornography for dissemination to individuals they meet online. Some women agree to watch pornography with their boyfriend or husband as a way to "spice up" the relationship or in an ineffective attempt to keep him from viewing it alone. In many cases, women can become addicted to the pornographic material. The same dangers of addiction and the same process of recovery that apply to men also apply to women.

6. If the problem is so big, why am I not more aware of it?

Traditionally, the topic of pornography and sexual addiction has been taboo, so it was rarely discussed openly. There has been a stigma associated with the viewing of pornography along with an assumption that good people do not view it. This created a social culture that strongly resisted the recognition of pornography as a problem or addiction. Today, pornography is marketed as a healthy pastime. Additionally, the idea is being perpetuated that only religious prudes with over-active guilt complexes disapprove of it. Much of society does not recognize pornography as a social concern. Unlike other addictions, pornography and sexual addiction are relatively easy to hide. This perpetuates the myth that pornography really is not a widespread problem. In actuality, it is a very real problem that needs to be discussed and addressed openly.

7. Will discussing pornography make the problem worse or even raise curiosity?

In society today, pornography is rampant; virtually all children will be exposed to pornography by the time they graduate from high school. As a result, it is necessary to discuss pornography openly.

Without this discussion, children and teens are left with the impression that pornography is rather harmless. They are left totally unaware of its addictive nature and of the fact that regularly viewing pornography can destroy their ability to experience healthy and empathic relationships with others. Openness does not mean condoning immoral behavior or lessening consequences; instead, it involves teaching the truths about the consequences of viewing pornography and creating a relationship where exposure to pornography is discussed.

8. Why is pornography so dangerous?

While some people feel there is nothing wrong with pornography, evidence shows that there can be very real and dangerous effects on both individuals and society as a whole. Research indicates that pornography can be extremely addictive. Pornography conditions a person to respond emotionally and sexually to a self-centered, artificial world. Many online relationships are similar to pornography in that they are not based in reality: what individuals “read and see about people, relationships, and sex is distorted.”

Research demonstrates that repeated exposure to pornography results in 1) increased callousness toward women, 2) trivialization of rape as a criminal offense, 3) distorted perceptions about sexuality, 4) increased appetite for more deviant and bizarre types of pornography, 5) devaluation of monogamy, 6) decreased satisfaction with a partner’s sexual performance, affection and physical appearance, 7) doubts about the value of marriage, 8.) decreased desire to have children, and 9) viewing non-monogamous relations as normal and natural behavior.

9. Is pornography addictive?

Many wonder why those viewing pornography do not just stop when they have a sincere desire to do so, especially as they experience dramatic negative consequences associated with the behavior. Most accept the concept that drugs and other substances can be addictive in a neurobiological sense, in other words, they can change the chemistry and function of the

pleasure/control centers of the brain, a process called neuromodulation. Can this happen with “natural” addictions also, such as with food, pathological gambling, and sexual addictions? The last ten years has produced research into the neurobiology of addiction which has provided strong evidence that the same “molecular switches” that induce and perpetuate drug addiction are also operative in natural addictions as well. This evidence supports the model that all addiction is perpetuated by an imbalance in the dopaminergic reward systems of the brain, this being associated with pathologically functioning control/reward centers.

The human brain is programmed to incentivize behaviors that contribute to survival. The mesolimbic dopaminergic system rewards eating and sexuality with powerful pleasure incentives. Cocaine, opioids, alcohol, and other drugs subvert, or hijack, these pleasure systems, and cause the brain to think a drug high is necessary to survive. Evidence is now strong that natural rewards such as food and sex affect the reward systems in the same way drugs affect them, thus the current interest in ‘natural addiction.’ Addiction, whether to cocaine, food, or sex occurs when these activities cease to contribute to a state of homeostasis, and instead cause adverse consequences. There are some professionals as well as those involved in the pornography industry that disagree with the research and suggest that pornography may become a compulsion but not an addiction. The pornography industry and its apologists want to minimize any research pointing to an addictive basis for this devastating social and individual emotional illness. Rather than consider what is now a growing and substantial body of research supporting the existence of natural addiction, they attack or ignore any such research or researcher, generally saying that sure, pornography can be a “problem” for some. They obtusely point out that since there is no specific study on pornography, nothing can be said with regard to pornography as an addiction.

10. What is Sexual Addiction?

Sexual addiction is best described as a progressive intimacy disorder characterized by compulsive sexual thoughts and acts. Like other addictions, its negative impact on the addict and on family members increases as the disorder progresses.

Over time, the addict usually has to escalate the addictive behavior to achieve the same results.

For some sex addicts, behavior does not progress beyond compulsive masturbation or the extensive use of pornography or phone or computer sex services. For others, addiction can involve strip clubs, soliciting prostitutes, or illegal activities such as exhibitionism, voyeurism, obscene phone calls, child molestation, or rape.

The National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity has defined sexual addiction as “engaging in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behavior acted out despite increasing negative consequences to self and others.” In other words, a sex addict will continue to engage in certain sexual behaviors despite facing potential health risks, financial problems, shattered relationships, or even arrest. Lust is the force behind sexual addiction: our healthy sexual feelings or our normal human sex drive are taken over by lust. Lust is the opposite of human intimacy; it’s a self-indulgent fantasy which separates the sex from emotional connection. It is always insatiably ‘hungry’ and the addict will risk family, job, and church to indulge in this hunger. As an addict stated, “Lust is the most important thing in my life, it takes priority over me.” (White Book, Sexaholics Anonymous, p 42).

11. In what ways might pornography serve as a “drug” or coping mechanism for other problems or kinds of stress?

While many individuals initially seek pornography out of a desire for excitement, anticipation, and pleasure, pornography is also often used as a way to escape from or cope with feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, stress, frustration, boredom, restlessness, loneliness, and insecurity. In this way, pornography becomes a drug used to cope with life problems, just as alcohol or illicit drugs might be used.

Every person finds ways to deal with the stress, anxiety, fear, boredom, and insecurity in their life. An addict is a person who has used addictive activities or substances as a way to deal with these things. Because pornography is readily accessible and can serve as a way to cope with anxiety, fear, boredom, etc. it is often used. This use can easily escalate into addiction.

12. How can I tell if someone I love is addicted to pornography?

If you are concerned that a loved one might be viewing pornography, the best course of action is to ask him or her directly. The following questions may also help identify if there is a problem. It is important to note that some of these conditions are common and may not necessarily be caused by pornography use, but by other life conditions or circumstances.

Physical Behaviors

Have you caught your loved one viewing inappropriate material or found pornographic material for which your loved one denies responsibility?

Does your loved one spend time on the computer after everyone else is in bed or stay up late for unexplained reasons?

Does your loved one quickly change the computer screen or turn off the computer when you walk by or enter the room?

Does your loved one frequently clear the internet history on the computer?

Does your loved one have substantial amounts of unaccounted-for time and avoid disclosing his or her activities?

Is your loved one working long hours at the office over prolonged periods of time for unexplained reasons?

Does your loved one seem tired or worn out? When questioned, do his or her answers seem odd or unsatisfactory?

Is your loved one missing appointments and deadlines without a satisfactory explanation?

How does your loved one respond when you address the topic of pornography? Does he initially seem uncomfortable or non-responsive?

Does your loved one seek out and view increasingly graphic and sexually explicit movies and TV shows?

Relational Behaviors

Does your loved one seem withdrawn, “checked out,” or emotionally disconnected for long periods of time?

Does your loved one spend less time with the family or seek isolation frequently?

Does your loved one seem more irritable and on edge?

Have you experienced a “gut feeling” that something is wrong?

Does your loved one seem to be unable to see his or her part in relationship conflicts and, instead, blames others when discussing such issues?

Does your loved one become angry over little things?

Do you periodically notice sharp contrasts in behavior which might include being more disconnected, uninvolved, and critical?

Has your loved one become more concerned with or critical of physical appearances?

Does your loved one send conflicting messages regarding his or her feelings and desires for your relationship?

Financial Behaviors

Are there charges on your credit card statements to unfamiliar companies?

Are there long---distance phone charges to unknown numbers on your phone bill?

Are there unaccounted-for expenditures?

Sexual Behaviors

Does your spouse seem to go unusually long periods of time between acts of sexual intimacy? Does your spouse seem to pressure you for sex even when you make it clear that it is not something you want to do?

Does your spouse seek to experiment with sexual behaviors that you find uncomfortable or unacceptable?

Does your spouse ask you to view sexually explicit material to improve or “spice up” your sex life?

13. What does sobriety mean?

For those attending SA meetings or Sexaholic Anonymous, sobriety is defined as “having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse.” In addition, true sexual sobriety “includes progressive victory over lust [...]...the driving force behind ... sexual acting out.” According to the SA White Book and Step into Action Books:

Physical sobriety is not an end in itself but a means towards an end-victory over the obsession and progress in recovery....In practical terms, we stop entertaining lustful fantasy. We stop using the internet to look for pornography images....We choose a different route to avoid places where lust triggered us or we acted out....If we are going to a business or event where we know there will be lust or sexual triggers (such as a supermarket, mall, or

an airport), we call someone....If we are uncomfortable in any given situation, we simply leave.....Our sobriety becomes the most important thing each day in every circumstance.

14. What does recovery mean?

Recovery from pornography or sexual addiction requires more than just stopping or abstaining from the behavior. Abstinence from viewing pornography is important, of course, but true recovery requires a lifestyle change as well as a change of heart. It is about recognizing and admitting to being an addict, setting appropriate boundaries to protect against future acting out, learning to cope with life’s challenges in healthy and appropriate ways, being willing to work on recovery daily, and changing underlying behaviors causing the individual to seek out pornography. Some factors that can indicate a person’s progress in recovery include:

Is he completely honest, open, and transparent in discussing his pornography problem—past and present?

What steps are being taken to recover?

Does he fully disclose his problem to his spouse, significant other, parents, therapist and religious leaders?

Does he work with a sponsor?

Does he participate in a 12---Step program? Is he getting appropriate counseling?

Does he still continue to acknowledge himself as an addict and continue to work his recovery program? How long has he gone without viewing pornography? Research has shown that it takes at least seven to twelve months before an addicted individual is on his way to establishing true and lasting sobriety. Complete recovery requires time. Does the person work on issues underlying his pornography addiction? Is the person working to change attitudes and behaviors regarding healthy sexuality, developing relationship skills, learning to address unresolved problems, and dealing with life more constructively?

Is he more concerned about helping others who might also be suffering from pornography addiction than about his own image and reputation, or keeping his behaviors related to pornography a secret?

15. How does viewing pornography affect the friends of those addicted?

Often friends of those addicted will initially experience feelings of disbelief, fear, disgust, betrayal, distrust, shock, denial, sadness, and anger. Individuals may wonder if they can ever trust the addict, if the addict poses a danger, and why the addict would continue in such behavior. Being addicted to pornography can also cause the individual to be emotionally unavailable and cause a distance in relationships. Discovering a pornography addiction may initially be especially devastating for youth who previously looked up to the addict as a mentor.

Some people may deal with these emotions by withdrawing from the relationship. Others may try to maintain a feeling of normalcy by avoiding the issue and pretending nothing has changed. Others may try to inappropriately step in and try to fix the problem without the tools necessary to assist the individual in finding true recovery. Those associated with the addict may experience a grieving process similar to what a spouse undergoes. It is important for them to identify and learn to work through these emotions.

16. How can I best support a recovering loved one?

One of the most painful parts of supporting a recovering addicted loved one is coming to accept the lack of control over whether or not the addict chooses to pursue recovery. Recovery is the personal responsibility of the addict. Addicts have to become ready and willing to find recovery for themselves. It is often difficult to find the balance between patience, encouragement, and acceptance versus enabling destructive behavior. Do not confuse attempts to micromanage the addict's recovery with true support and encouragement. A few important elements to keep in mind are:

Focus on personal choices that you can make regardless of the other person's decisions. Take responsibility for your own peace and emotional wellbeing. Get help for yourself and recognize the ways that being in a close relationship with an addict will likely affect you. Many find counseling and a 12--- Step program to be critical in this process.

Do not take responsibility for the addict's recovery. Recognize and accept that being a policeman is not helpful to the addict. The addict must ultimately choose his own course of action.

Set boundaries and have the commitment to stick to them. Although an addict can make his or her own choices, he or she cannot dictate the choices of others or avoid the consequences of violating the boundaries of others. Try to identify ways in which the addicted individual is reaching out for help and recovery. Find ways to connect with him that are emotionally supportive, safe, and uplifting. Reaching out can be a tremendous source of encouragement and support.

17. How can I best support a friend or loved one who is in a relationship with a pornography addict?

When individuals are in a relationship with a pornography addict, they frequently feel isolated, alone, or helpless. Friends or loved ones of those who are directly impacted by the pornography addiction of another can best help by being available to support them. Listen and allow your friend to share his or her feelings in a safe, confidential environment. Do not tell that person that you know what it is like. Do not try to solve the individual's problems or tell her what should be done. Encourage the individual to seek appropriate professional and religious counseling, find a sponsor, and attend meetings of support groups. Let the suffering individuals know that they are loved, accepted, and supported as they make important decisions. Learn about pornography addiction and encourage your friend to do the same.

18. What if a friend or loved one does not want recovery?

Ultimately, the person struggling with the pornography addiction must be the one to decide if he or she wants to do the work and make the lifestyle changes necessary for recovery. Continue to be understanding and supportive, but read about the problem of becoming co---dependent or enabling the addict in his or her behavior. Encourage the addict to get help. Regardless of whether an addict wants to recover, it is important to provide support to the spouse of the addict. Encourage the spouse to get appropriate help and to set boundaries for protection in the relationship.

19. What if my friend or loved one says he wants to recover, but continues to have relapses?

Although a relapse can be a setback, what really matters most is the actions the addict chooses to take after a relapse. Does the individual try to excuse and or minimize his return to pornography, or is he contrite, with a broken heart? Help addicts understand that just because they may suffer a relapse does not mean they are a lost cause. Feelings of shame, humiliation and worthlessness can compound addictive behavior. . At the same time, do not minimize or disregard acting out behavior. Help the addict realize that the relapse is serious. If appropriate, ask questions about what events may have triggered the slip. Encourage addicts to be regularly accountable to someone about their behavior choices, continue to attend 12---Step meetings, and work with a sponsor and therapist. Addicts can learn from their mistakes as they seek appropriate counsel and guidance. Recovery is hard work and requires serious lifestyle changes. By encouraging the individual to identify specific steps to avoid future slips and by expressing love and support, you can help struggling individuals to find hope, determination, and the courage needed to continue in their recovery program.

The 12---Step Program

20. Why is attending a 12---Step meeting so important to recovery?

For those who are seeking recovery, committing to participate in a 12---Step program is often a critical milestone in the recovery process. Many people have attempted to stop viewing pornography on their own, only to eventually fail and/or relapse. For many addicts, it is only when they break the secrecy surrounding their addiction, admit that they will not be able to change on their own, and join a 12---Step fellowship that real recovery is found. The White Book of Sexaholics Anonymous states:

We sexaholics do not presume to be authorities on addiction of any kind, much less sex addiction....Some researchers even confess to being baffled by what addiction really is ... We speak from our own experience as seen through recovery. We have a solution. We don't claim that it's for everybody, but for us, it works.

There is an unwritten step underlying all twelve. Call it Step Zero: "We participated in the fellowship of the program". No one seems able to stay sober and progress in recovery without it, though some try. For most of us, without associating in some way with other recovering individuals, there is no lasting sobriety and none of the fringe benefits of recovery, growth, freedom, and joy ... We don't try to explain this; it is simply a fact.

For those closely impacted by the addiction of another, attending a 12---Step program is also important. One of the least understood components of sexual addiction is the devastating effect it can have on a spouse or loved one. In the process of trying to cope with the problems of living with a sex addict, a spouse or loved one frequently develops his or her own set of negative behaviors or co-dependent habits which are debilitating to the individual and destructive to relationships.

Regardless of whether the addict chooses to follow a recovery program, the spouse or loved one of an addict should work his or her own recovery.

Attending 12---Step meetings is a vital part of that recovery.

It is important to note that support groups, or 12--- Step programs, are not substitutes for therapeutic treatment and individuals should also seek appropriate professional counseling as a key part of their recovery process.

21. What is a 12---Step Program?

12---Step programs have been unusually successful in helping those struggling with addiction Find recovery. There are over 100 different variations of 12---Step recovery programs in existence today. They address virtually every imaginable type of addiction. All of them, are based on the original 12---Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous and the AA Big Book (first published in 1939). Other 12-Step programs deal with specific issues such as drug addiction, food addiction, codependency, over-spending, and gambling. 12---Step programs are non-professional and non-profit. While effective in promoting recovery from addiction, they are not intended to replace therapy led by trained professionals. All 12-Step programs share a number of elements that aid in the recovery process:

Openness: Breaking the shame and secrecy surrounding an addiction is one of the first steps in overcoming it. Meetings provide a safe, supportive environment to share feelings and experiences with others who understand what you are going through because they have experienced the same thing.

Specific Boundaries and Recovery Plan: A 12---Step program can provide specific rules and definitions of abstinence or sobriety that are used to measure progress and recovery. The program also offers literature and instructions for recovery that can be applied on a daily basis to help the individual overcome addiction.

Accountability: Addicts check in frequently with a sponsor and also report their progress at meetings. These interactions provide accountability and transparency. They also help to dissipate the shame surrounding addiction so the addict can focus on the actions needed to achieve recovery.

Support: Recovering addicts share their experience, strength and hope with new members who are just starting the recovery process. Newer and more experienced addicts in recovery all find support and encouragement by attending meetings, talking with other group members, making outreach calls, reading literature, working with a sponsor, or serving as a sponsor.

The Twelve Steps: Working the steps on a daily basis is critical to addressing the emotional and spiritual issues behind the addiction. Daily effort is necessary to achieve long---term success.

Higher Power: All 12---Step programs focus on turning to a Higher Power for intervention and healing. Most 12---Step programs are non-denominational. They are careful to define the concept of God as broadly as possible so their program can feel inclusive to as many people as possible.

22. What are elements of a good 12---Step program?

Much of the benefit obtained from attending a 12--- Step meeting is derived from the other members present. Accordingly, the efficacy of 12-Step meetings is as varied as the people who attend them. It is important to find a meeting that works for the individual seeking help.

Effective groups will have:

Meetings attended regularly by a reasonable number of people who have found healing and recovery and who can share their experience, strength and hope.

Available sponsors who are experienced and qualified to guide newcomers through the recovery process.

Recommended literature specific to the addiction and a methodology for working the 12 Steps.

A definition of sobriety consistent with the value system of the individual seeking recovery.

Regular meetings several times each week conducted by someone who has gained recovery from the specific addiction.

If after attending several meetings of a particular 12-Step group, the individual seeking recovery does not have a positive experience, he or she should look for a different group that can better meet his or her needs and matches the above criteria. It is important to try several different groups and to not give up until a group is found that works for the individual. See www.salifeline.org for more information on finding 12-Step meetings.

23. What are LDS ARP, PASG, and Family Support Group Meetings?

The LDS church sponsors several 12---Step recovery groups. These groups include church doctrine as a central part of recovery. Addiction Recovery Program (ARP) meetings are open to men and women who want to recover from any type of addictive behavior, and they use the twelve steps as a sequential way to better apply the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The Pornography Addiction Support Group (PASG) is specifically for pornography or sexual addiction and the corresponding Family Support Group is for the loved ones of those addicted. The PASG and Family Support Group meetings follow the same format as ARP meetings and use the same manual, the Addiction Recovery Program: A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing. The LDS Family Service's program is also working on a family support guide to assist those who have a loved one in addiction. The number of people attending meetings and the frequency of meetings held can vary greatly depending on the location.

24. What are SA and S---Anon?

Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) is a 12---Step program designed specifically for those who are struggling with sexual addiction, which includes pornography. S-Anon is a 12-Step program designed to help those who are affected by someone else's sexual behavior. While these programs are non---denominational, their principles are very similar to those of the Christian faith. An advantage of SA in particular is its definition of sexual sobriety: "No form of sex with one's self or with partners other than the spouse [and] progressive victory over lust." Some other groups do not necessarily promote the Christian standards of chastity, but instead encourage members to create their own definition of "sobriety."

25. What can I expect when I attend a 12---Step meeting?

At 12---Step meetings, a group leader will generally begin by reading verbatim a set script, followed by readings from selected program literature and an opportunity for group members to share with others about the readings or their specific recovery experiences. As is tradition, speakers generally introduce themselves by first name only, after which the group responds, "Hi, ____ (name)."

Although the format of the meetings may feel odd to newcomers, the script soon becomes familiar and comfortable as the attendees learn the importance of each concept. There are no dues or fees for membership, although a basket will generally be passed around at meetings so that attendees can contribute a dollar or two in order to meet obligations of rent and operating costs.

26. What does involvement in a 12---Step program entail?

Initially, involvement in a 12---Step program usually entails attending a minimum of three meetings per week. Some programs encourage even more. Attending a meeting specifically designed for your addiction is ideal. However, it can still be useful to attend other types of 12---Step meetings, especially if meetings for your particular addiction are not available. If meetings are not readily available locally, an increasing number of live telephone or online meetings can also be found.

Working the twelve steps on a daily basis is what makes the 12---Step program work. This process includes

studying prescribed literature, journaling, and reporting commitments made to a sponsor. Having a sponsor is critical to the recovery process. As progress in recovery is achieved, those in recovery have the opportunity to fill service positions within the program. This may include being a sponsor, being responsible for the group's literature library, acting as a secretary to the group, or serving as liaison to the 12---Step group's regional body. Maintaining recovery requires that we "give back what [we] have so generously been given." Many recovery addicts report that the most effective way to safeguard their own sobriety and recovery is to work closely with other addicts who are trying to find that same recovery.

27. What is a sponsor?

Sponsorship is a critical component of all 12---Step programs. Sponsors are those who have worked the twelve steps and have found sobriety and recovery from a specific addiction. Because of their experience, they are in a unique position to help guide others suffering from the same addiction through the recovery process. They provide hope, accountability, and specific guidance on how to avoid relapse. The literature of one 12---Step program encourages the newcomer to "find a sponsor who has what you want and ask how it was obtained." A sponsor will give assignments designed to help gain and maintain recovery. The assignments may include specific rules of conduct, attendance at meetings, reading various kinds of literature, and reporting on a designated schedule. Typically those struggling with addiction call their sponsor at set intervals to report their progress and get support or practical feedback as they encounter daily problems. The addicted individual may also call a sponsor or any other program member at any time when they feel tempted to act out.

While the need for addicts to have a sponsor is generally recognized, many people do not understand the critical role that a sponsor can play in the recovery of an addict's spouse or loved one. The spouse's sponsor can give support and validation and help the loved one understand that he or she is not responsible for the addict's behavior. The sponsor can also help the spouse or loved one set healthy boundaries for personal protection.

28. How can I find a good sponsor?

Sponsors can be found at 12---Step meetings. Although anyone who is in recovery from a specific addiction can generally be a sponsor, it is important to find a sponsor who will work well with the individual seeking help. It is also important to remember that each sponsor offers unique insights and perspectives. At different points in the recovery process, individuals may feel a need to change sponsors. Some considerations in selecting a sponsor are included below.

Sponsors ordinarily should not be related or closely associated with the individual (i.e. a spouse, partner, family member, loved one, or even close friend). They need to provide an impartial perspective. Sponsors should be emotionally and spiritually stable in their own recovery. Unless they have thoroughly worked the steps and continue to do so, they cannot provide the insight necessary to help someone else. Sponsors should be readily available, willing to accept phone calls, and encourage those they sponsor to reach out to them whenever needed. Sponsors should keep confidences and maintain the anonymity of the person they are helping. Most programs suggest that sponsors be of the same gender as the addict. This is especially important for pornography and sexual addiction. Sponsors should hold individuals to their commitments. A good sponsor is someone who is honest and calls the addict out when he or she starts minimizing commitments or slipping into addictive or enabling behaviors. Sponsors must care about the individual. Effective sponsors will listen with empathy and act out of love and a desire to help the individual they sponsor succeed.

29. Which is more important: 12---Step support groups or professional therapy?

12---Step groups and professional counseling are equally important to recovery. Most individuals with successful recovery spend a substantial amount of time in counseling and the 12---Step program. Even though 12---Step support will serve as the foundation for long---term recovery, professional treatment provides a critical component for individual and relationship healing. For most people, a multi---dimensional approach works best. Like a rope, the real strength is not in the individual strands, but in weaving many strands together.

A balanced recovery program will include an open-ended period of 12-Step support, individual and couples counseling, group counseling, education, proper nutrition and exercise, spirituality, and other lifestyle changes. Even though a handful of individuals and couples have apparently experienced recovery doing only one or the other, the majority of individuals and couples benefit from a multi---dimensional approach.

30. What if there is not a good 12---Step group in my area?

It is important to be aware of how effective the 12-Step groups are in your area at helping individuals find recovery. If you are struggling to find 12---Step meetings near you or would like help strengthening local groups, contact info@salifeline.org. For specific information on organizing SA meetings, visit www.sa.org. To organize S-Anon meetings, see <http://www.sanon.org/default.htm>. To request that a LDS PASG or Family Support Group meeting be created in your area, contact your local LDS Family Services, <http://www.providentliving.org/ses/emotionalhealth/contact/1.12169,2128---1.00.html>.

31. What if the addict is a youth who is too young to attend 12---Step meetings?

Many children and youth are now addicted to pornography. Without appropriate help, their addiction can inhibit their ability to form healthy, emotional relationships with anyone. Because of the special considerations for teens, there are no regular, public 12-Step meetings available. There are counselors who specialize in this age group. Additionally, some therapists offer group sessions specifically for youth.

Protecting Against Pornography

32. How can I avoid pornography?

Because of the changes in the way information is disseminated through high---speed media, there is no way to completely avoid pornography. Accidental exposure occurs even with the best software filtering programs. There are, however, some ways to decrease exposure. The most important method is to be personally committed to self-regulation.

Individuals must be ready to turn away from provocative images that are displayed in advertising, written material, magazines, movies, television, games, or any electronic device connected to the Internet. Decreasing exposure to media is a good way to reduce the desensitizing process that occurs in our hyper---sexualized culture. It's important to note that today's mainstream media contains sexualized content that would have been considered "soft---core" pornography 30 years ago. Personal standards must be established ahead of time to avoid desensitization to offensive, immoral or pornographic material. Not only is decreasing exposure to triggering media important, but it is also important to personally monitor ongoing emotional and relational health that could increase vulnerability.

33. How can I protect my child from pornography?

Education is essential in helping children become aware of the dangers involved with using pornography. Most people do not know that viewing pornography can quickly turn into a lifelong addiction that is extremely difficult to overcome. Teach children what to watch out for and how to respond when they encounter pornographic images or information. Regular, open communication about pornography with family members reinforces the commitment to core values and family rules that are established and agreed upon.

Careful consideration should be given when determining what kind of internet access to give children with phones, games or computers. Parents need to monitor the use of electronic devices. Vigilance is required even after taking precautions. Parents should be aware that 79% of pornography is viewed in the home—either their own home or that of a friend—so they need to establish rules regarding internet use. Although filters will not prevent a child from viewing pornography if that child is determined to do so, it will provide an initial delay and block most easy or accidental access. Having discussions about media use, posting guidelines for computers, and drafting a family pledge signed by all members may be beneficial. Additionally, watching for negative changes in a child's behavior is important. If any such changes are noticed in a child's behavior or a parent is concerned about possible pornography use, it is important to talk to the child and get help immediately if needed.

34. What can I do in my home to increase internet safety?

Individuals and parents can do many things to safeguard their homes from the harmful influences found on the Internet. While there is no foolproof system, some simple steps can help to reduce the risk of family members seeing encountering pornographic materials. Please visit www.salifeline.org for more information.

- Become educated about computers and how the Internet works. Your Internet browser allows you to view a history of sites that have been visited (although the history can be deleted).
- Place computers in high---traffic areas of the home. Kitchens and family rooms usually have the most traffic. Because these rooms usually do not have doors, they are typically less secluded than bedrooms. Position computer monitors so the screen faces outward for public view.
- Install Internet filters on electronic devices. Learn their features and how to use them. Good filtering programs have an un---erasable history of websites (including chat rooms) that have been visited and when they were visited. They can also provide a record of incoming and outgoing emails. Some filters allow you to password-protect the Internet or certain types of websites. Others allow you to set limits on when the Internet is accessible.
- Teach family members about the dangers of Internet pornography, including how to escape if an inappropriate site is accidentally accessed. Usually it is recommended to just push the off button to shut down the entire system or to walk away.
- Teach family members to tell their parents if they encounter any form of pornography while on the computer or elsewhere. This will help reduce the fear or shame of accidental exposure. It also serves to open discussion about the dangers of pornography.
- Teach family members to use the Internet for a specific purpose only. Aimless surfing makes it easier to happen to come across inappropriate sites.

- Teach family members to avoid public and private chat rooms, bulletin boards, forums, or unfamiliar areas on the Internet. Such places present a substantial risk for children and adults.

- Teach children not to share any personal information online without parental knowledge and permission. Many predators pose as children to gain access and to information that may put children at risk.

- Be aware of the policies of your children's school and the local public library regarding Internet use and accessibility.

- Teach family members never to open email from anyone they don't know. Even emails apparently from those you know could be a problem.

35. Why should I teach my children about healthy sexuality?

Our culture is filled with misleading and destructive messages about sexuality. If we let children learn about sexuality from the media and other influences that surround them, they are unlikely to develop a healthy concept of sex. When children understand healthy sexuality, they are better prepared to counter the unhealthy myths about sex and can better understand why pornography is so destructive. Parents must actively seek opportunities to teach children about gender roles, sex, and love. This should include the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of sex, including the proper, healthy role of sex within a marriage relationship. Given the prevalence of sexual and pornographic material in the world, teaching should begin early if parents wish to be the principal shapers of their children's attitudes about sex. Teaching about healthy sexuality helps build openness, trust, and love, which allow children to feel comfortable discussing other subjects with their parents as well.

36. As a parent, when should I begin teaching about pornography and sexuality?

Pornography should be discussed much younger than most parents think. The average age of exposure to pornography is eleven. Parents should begin teaching very young children about modesty, privacy, and self-respect. Starting with basic concepts when children are young makes it easier to transition to discussing pornography more directly later on.

By age eight, children are verbal, open, curious, less embarrassed, and old enough to understand many significant concepts. If a child can access the Internet, it might be a good time to talk with them about pornography.

37. How can I talk to my child about pornography and healthy sexuality?

Teaching begins by answering questions asked by children at any age simply and without embarrassment. Teaching about healthy sexuality includes providing instruction about the body and helping children understand that there are parts of the body that are kept private. Parents can effectively educate their children about pornography by finding appropriate teaching moments to discuss many of the same questions and issues presented in these questions.

When children unexpectedly view inappropriate or provocative material, they often instinctively hide it from their parents out of shame and embarrassment. Taking every opportunity to bring such material out in the open is important. Parents can begin teaching about pornography simultaneously when teaching about the body. For example, if a child picks up a book that illustrates personal parts of the human body, a parent could respond with a comment such as, "I see that picture caught your interest. Do you have any questions? Let's talk about it." Similarly, when a child views something sexually provocative or pornographic, acknowledging the material without discomfort or surprise is important. A parent might say, "I see that caught your attention. When we run across those kinds of pictures it is important to change the channel [close the book, throw it away, etc.] and then tell a parent." It is important for parents to take the time to explain why the material is inappropriate and what to do when inappropriate material is encountered. Teaching children about what to do when they see pornography is just as important as teaching children what to do if they are exposed to any other drug.

This type of communication sends a clear message to children that parents are a good resource when they have questions. Children need to see that parents know what kinds of material are available, that they are not shocked or embarrassed by it, and that they have clear rules about what material should or should not be viewed.

Responding to young children openly and factually with simple statements and explanations is generally best. As children get older, additional opportunities will arise to have more detailed discussions. If the topic does not arise on its own, find ways to bring up pornography and discuss it as children get older.

38. How should I respond if I discover my child is viewing pornography?

First and foremost, stay calm and do not overreact. A child's recovery is going to be influenced by his ability to trust and confide in his parents. If a parent overreacts, she will likely cause the child to be more secretive down the road. If he senses that his parents understand and still love him, however, he will be more likely to communicate with them and allow his parents to be a part of the recovery process. Do not be afraid to be honest and open in your discussions. See "Creating a Safe Place to Talk about Dangerous Things" by Jeffery Ford in the appendix of this manual.

It is important that children understand that their parents love them and want them to be happy. Help them understand what pornography is, why it can be damaging, and why viewing pornography is of concern to everyone. If a child is regularly viewing pornography, ensure that he gets help. It is critical that children 1) come out of hiding and talk with their parents, 2) become educated about pornography addiction and recovery, 3) be taught how to set boundaries, 4) get therapy, and 5) attend a 12-Step meeting regularly.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, the parent must also become educated, learn to set boundaries for the child, attend counseling, and participate in a 12-Step program. Discovering a pornography problem can be very devastating for parents who feel they have no real control or ability to affect the situation. It is common for parents to feel guilt for not having been able to prevent the problem. By actively taking these steps, parents can learn to deal with their child's addiction appropriately and effectively and also experience healing themselves.

Do I Have a Problem?

39. How can I tell if I have a pornography problem?

Simply put, an individual has a problem when he tells himself that he is not going to look at pornography anymore and then finds himself doing it anyway.

Pornography addicts return to thinking about, planning for, and participating in secret behaviors that take priority over healthy and important activities. The following list may help individuals in deciding if help would be beneficial:

- Feelings that the ability to stop viewing pornography is out of control
- Recurring patterns of "stop---start" behavior with frequent or consistent relapses
- Continued pornography use despite possible adverse consequences and losses including time, money, job, education, marriage, and family relationships
- Escalation of behavior including increased time spent viewing pornography, the need for increased stimulation and viewing or participating in harsher and more graphic forms of pornography
- History of lies, secrecy, deception, and living a double life in order to maintain the appearance of normality while participating in the viewing of pornography and other sexual behaviors
- Feelings of guilt, shame, and low self---worth related to one's sexual behavior

40. Why is it important to be open and disclose my pornography problem to someone?

Pornography addiction thrives in secrecy and often breeds feelings of shame and guilt which tend to cause the problem to escalate. Admitting and disclosing pornography use is the first step in stopping for good. Once an addict can admit and talk about the behavior, the shame and guilt often begin to dissipate. Talking to others can provide needed support, additional resources and accountability.

In contrast, keeping pornography behavior secret can actually create more emotional arousal, which may lead to additional acting out. "Asking for support is not easy, but living in recovery requires absolute honesty and the courage to ask for help. Denial, self--deception, and isolation are hallmarks of addictive behavior. These traits make it difficult to achieve lasting and stable progress in recovery without the support and perspective of others. It is important for an addict to enlist the help of appropriate and effective support people as soon as possible" (LDS.org).

41. Is recovery possible and what does it involve?

Recovery is definitely possible, though difficult. Those who are completely committed to doing what it takes to find and maintain recovery are successful. Keep in mind, however, that the individual must desire recovery. The five elements of healing are:

- Come Out of Hiding: Coming out of hiding and honestly disclosing the problem to a spouse and ecclesiastical leader is essential. Committing to continued honesty and transparency is fundamental to the recovery process.
- Become Educated: Gain education regarding pornography addiction and the recovery process.
- Set Boundaries: Set specific boundaries to avoid situations that will compromise your commitment to recovery.
- Work a 12---Step Program: Find a sponsor, attend group meetings several times a week, and work the 12 Steps on a daily basis.
- Get Therapy: Seek professional counseling from a qualified therapist who specializes in sexual addiction.

42. What recovery programs and resources are available for me as an addict?

12---Step programs: To find a 12---Step program, see the following websites:

- SA Lifeline: www.salifeline.org
- LDS Family Services:
[http:// www.providentliving.org](http://www.providentliving.org)

Therapists: To find a therapist, see www.salifeline.org. Ask family members or friends for references for a therapist who specializes in sexual addiction. Additional resources for finding a therapist include the following:

- LifeSTAR Network: [http:// www.lifestarnetwork.org/](http://www.lifestarnetwork.org/)
- Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health (SASH):
<http://www.sash.net>

Books: To view books that can aid in the recovery process, see the resource lists in the appendix of this manual or visit www.salifeline.org.

If additional help is needed, please email SA Lifeline at info@salifeline.org.

43. How do I find the right counselor?

Finding professional counseling is essential to the recovery process. Most individuals and couples struggling with the impact of pornography will benefit from a combination of individual, couple, and group treatment. Support groups or 12---Step programs are not substitutes for therapeutic treatment. In selecting a therapist, the following considerations may be helpful:

What training has the therapist received in dealing with sexual behaviors and addictions? Because of the complex nature of pornography addiction, specialized training is highly desirable. Ask the therapist if he or she is a member of a national organization for treatment of sexual addiction and if he or she has received specific certification or training.

Does the therapist specialize in sexual addiction and how many years of experience does he or she have treating these problems? Good therapists specializing in other psychological problems may not necessarily be the best for treating sexual behavior. Are counseling services provided for the non-addicted spouse? Involvement of the non-addicted spouse in therapy is paramount for the spouse's personal wellbeing and also for the health of the marriage.

Does the therapist or clinic provide group therapy? Experience has shown that recovery is enhanced when individuals participate in group therapy.

What does the therapist believe that the effects of viewing pornography are? Therapists often have varying opinions regarding whether the viewing of pornography and engaging in related sexual activities are problematic behaviors. Make certain that the therapist you are seeing shares your beliefs and value system.

Does the therapist believe that pornography use can be classified as an addiction? Therapists who do not believe pornography is addictive will probably not be as effective in treatment.

What steps are considered necessary to recovery? Some therapists do not believe recovery is possible or do not exhibit a strong understanding of what recovery requires. How does the therapist define recovery and measure success in treating those who view pornography? Discovering how a therapist defines recovery can also help gauge the effectiveness of treatment.

44. How do I “stay clean” or avoid relapse?

Addictive tendencies frequently do not completely go away. Nevertheless, as many individuals diligently work the steps of recovery, the behavior is kept in check and they never act out again. This is often referred to as recovery. Maintaining recovery generally involves continuing to work the twelve steps, setting and keeping boundaries, and having some permanent form of accountability through participation in a recovery program with a sponsor and/or with a religious leader or friend. Prompt and complete honesty in admitting any slips of behavior is critical. Those who avoid relapse are generally those who recognize that they are still addicts and are vigilant in continuing to utilize the tools of recovery. They also learn to recognize negative emotions and thought patterns leading to compulsions to act out on their addiction through pornography use. They address emotional needs by making necessary adjustments and reaching out to others for support long before those needs turn into addictive behaviors and acting out.

45. How does viewing pornography affect me and my relationships?

Viewing pornography can distort realistic views of healthy sexuality, lead to the objectification of women, and promote sexual gratification as a top emotional priority. Insensitivity to a partner’s personal needs and feelings are often a hallmark of relationships where pornography is involved. Even though pornography may be viewed in secret, the inability to connect with a partner and loved ones is often felt by all.

Because pornography involves emotional, chemical, and physical stimulation, it can reset the brain in such a way that normal, healthy sexual experiences become unsatisfying and unfulfilling. Increasingly extreme or deviant sexual acts are often required to bring about sexual satisfaction. As a result, pornography addiction frequently destroys healthy marital relationships and can lead to sexual acting out with self and others or other immoral behavior. Some statistics indicate that the likelihood of infidelity is increased by 300% percent where pornography is involved and 55% of divorces in the United States occur at least in part as a result of pornography use.

Pornography use destroys trust and respect and can make the user emotionally and physically unavailable to his partner. Pornography becomes a counterfeit attachment, drawing attention and time away from other relationships such as with a spouse or girlfriend. Additionally, addicts turn to pornography to satiate emotional needs and numb uncomfortable or painful emotions. This progressive behavior chokes the life out of healthy emotional, sexual, and spiritual intimacy between individuals.

46. How does my viewing pornography affect my spouse or loved one?

Not only does viewing pornography damage relationships, it can also have a direct and destructive effect on the wellbeing of a spouse or loved one. Pornography addiction can destroy a spouse’s sense of being uniquely important to their partner. Many spouses report feeling a sense of betrayal, having low levels of self-esteem, having decreased trust in their partner’s commitment to the relationship, feeling diminished sense of security, and experiencing reduced marital satisfaction.

These negative emotions can manifest themselves in many ways. Wives may try to overcompensate in the hopes of regaining their husband’s attention or approval. Anorexia or other eating disorders are common among spouses of addicts, along with an unhealthy sense of responsibility for the success of the marriage and the addict’s behavior. Spouses may swing between feelings of anger, hatred, anxiety, and unhealthy compulsions to protect their partner and marriage from humiliation. The feelings of hopelessness may even escalate to thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

Pornography addicts frequently exert pressure on their spouses to keep the issue secret. Many spouses feel trapped in an unhealthy kind of isolation because they are unable to discuss their feelings or receive necessary needed support and help. Without appropriate help and counseling, the emotional, physical, and spiritual health of the addict's spouse may be in as much danger as that of the addict himself.

47. How does my viewing pornography affect my children?

Pornography causes a change in the way the user relates to others—especially to their children and spouse. The pornography user learns a simple, one-sided sexual response which eliminates intimacy. The user actually loses his ability to emotionally connect with others. Instead of warmth, empathy, and compassion, the user interacts with family members with detachment and criticism. He is emotionally unavailable. This can be very damaging to children.

48. Does discovering or disclosing a pornography addiction generally result in divorce?

In some cases, discovering or disclosing a pornography addiction may eventually lead to divorce. Some statistics indicate that 55% percent of divorces are related in some way to pornography. It is much less likely to result in divorce if the problem is disclosed by the addict, rather than discovered by the spouse. A large number of couples are able to find recovery and healing for the addict, the spouse, and the relationship. Several factors increase the probability of being able to heal the relationship, as outlined in the next answer.

49. As a recovering addict, what can I do to heal and strengthen my marriage?

Both the person addicted to pornography and the spouse must find their own recovery before any significant progress can be made toward healing the relationship. Pornography addicts frequently discourage their spouses from talking about the problem, getting counseling, or attending a 12-step program. There is an instinct to keep the problem private in an attempt to protect the marriage.

In reality, keeping the problem quiet is more safe and comfortable (i.e., less volatile) but is often very damaging to both the addict and the spouse. As difficult as it is, a recovering addict who truly wants to heal and strengthen the marriage should do everything he can to encourage his spouse to reach out and get help for herself.

Once both partners are committed to and consistently working their own recoveries, trust generally will slowly return to the relationship. Hope and optimism will grow. This does not mean, however, that the rest of the journey will be easy. During this time, marital counseling in addition to individual recovery programs is usually necessary. Understand that pornography addiction often causes a substantial amount of emotional and relational trauma for the spouse. It is important that an addict allows his spouse time and space to heal at her own pace. An addict should be sympathetic to his spouse's feelings of anger, frustration, ambivalence, and hurt. As an addict makes an effort to strengthen the relationship and work on his individual recovery, the three recoveries (his, hers, and ours) begin to support and complement one another. Specific actions that can be taken by the addict to help strengthen the marriage include the following:

Fully commit to completing all necessary elements of recovery.

Disclose past behavior. By postponing disclosure or confessing a little bit at a time out of the fear that the spouse "can't handle everything," the healing process is often impeded and the resulting hurt prolonged. It may be wise to consult with a therapist and/or sponsor before making the full initial disclosure.

Continue to promptly disclose any slips promptly. Honesty and openness (transparency) are essential. Most spouses report that although relapses are difficult to deal with, secrecy and lies are intolerable. Graphic details are not necessary, but the spouse should know the type of slip, the duration, severity, and frequency of acting out. Set realistic expectations about the recovery process. Change takes time and there will almost always be slips or relapses. Recognize that the marriage also takes time to heal.

Recognize the trauma a spouse may be experiencing. Reach out to the other person, try to alleviate her workload and spend time together doing activities that can help rebuild the relationship (walking, gardening, cooking, etc).

Encourage the spouse to get counseling and support. Attending counseling as a couple is also helpful.

Spouses of Addicts

50. Typically, how does a spouse respond when they find out about a pornography problem?

Feeling intense hurt, sadness, low self---worth, betrayal, anger, or even hatred is common.³⁶ It is important for spouses to recognize how they are responding emotionally, and to find a trusted friend or family member or ecclesiastical leader with whom they can share these feelings and seek support. It is also important to honestly share those feelings with the addicted spouse.

Keeping things in perspective is important. Having a pornography problem does not negate everything good in the addicted spouse. Still, it is a significant, serious problem and should not be minimized. Remembering positive experiences can help provide motivation to work through the difficult times ahead and apply the necessary effort to save the marriage. It is helpful to try to be calm and compassionate. On the other hand, feeling responsible to change the addict's behavior or lashing out in anger is not helpful. The addict's spouse needs help and support as she works through her emotions and sets appropriate boundaries. Getting help will ensure the emotional well---being of the spouse and will aid in repairing the marriage relationship.

51. Why can't my spouse just stop viewing pornography?

Pornography is addictive. Once the addiction is established it is extremely difficult to quit and it is almost impossible to stop without outside help.

52. How is the addiction of a spouse/loved one likely to affect me personally?

Many spouses of addicts feel a sense of isolation and abandonment after discovering the addiction. It is common for the addict's spouse to avoid telling others about the addiction, hide her feelings, or pretend that nothing is wrong. She often feels a great deal of pressure to protect the addicted spouse and preserve the image of normalcy. As the addict's spouse withdraws, it is common for her to feel increasingly lonely and hopeless. Depression and even thoughts of suicide may result.

Discovering an addiction can start a chain of devastating emotional responses. Many spouses of addicts experience intense anger, while others respond by feeling numb and listless. Thoughts such as, "How could this happen to me?" or "What did I do to deserve this?" are common. Many spouses have feelings of guilt or a false misplaced sense of personal responsibility for the addiction. Spouses often experience feelings of low self-worth and fall into thinking, "This wouldn't have happened if I had just been a better wife," or "If I was were just more attractive or sexy, this wouldn't be a problem." This type of thinking is often followed by feeling the need to fix the problem and the belief that some action on their part, such as working harder to be pleasant or losing weight, will make the problem go away. When such efforts to fix the problem do not work, feelings of fear, anxiety, hopelessness, and despair increase. Fear and uncertainty about the future—"What is going to happen? If I were to leave the marriage, what would I do? What about the children? What about our marriage?"—can become overwhelming.

As emotional wellbeing deteriorates, spouses often fall into counter---productive behaviors or dangerous coping mechanisms. Spouses commonly try to be the policeman by constantly monitoring the addict or trying to manage his recovery. They frequently become obsessed with looking for "evidence" by checking their spouse's email, reading their journal, looking for unusual charges on credit card statements, or checking the calls on their spouse's cell phone. Many develop eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, overeating, or under---eating. Serious depression is very common. Hopeful feelings like "We have finally gotten to the bottom of this and will put this behind us forever," alternate with feelings such as, "There is no hope for ever getting out of this endless cycle." The addict's spouse may wonder what is wrong and why they she feels so out of control.

53. How is the addiction of a spouse likely to affect our relationship?

Discovering that your spouse is addicted to pornography can turn your world upside down. Many spouses of addicts feel deeply hurt, betrayed, angry, ashamed, numb, sad, depressed, or helpless. Many initially worry that they will never be able to trust their spouses again. Spouses often feel uncertainty and fear for the future.

The cycle of feelings experienced is very similar to grieving for the death of a loved one and may include the following symptoms: (1) shock, (2) disbelief or denial, (3) anger, (4) bargaining, (5) depression and then, finally, (6) acceptance. Acknowledging, accepting, and allowing those feelings to take their course are important steps. Addicts frequently withdraw and disconnect from relationships. The addict may exert pressure on the spouse to protect his secrecy or to not pursue help. It is crucial for spouses of addicts to get help, regardless of whether the addicted approves.

54. As the spouse of an addict, what can I do to find healing for my damaged relationship?

It is just as important for the spouse of an addict to reach out and get help as it is for the addict. This means developing a strong support network, getting appropriate counseling, participating in a 12---Step program, and having a sponsor. If both parties are willing to do their part in working toward recovery, usually trust can be rebuilt over time and the relationship can begin to heal. The initial focus, however, needs to be on individual recovery. While many spouses of addicts want to jump in and work on fixing the marriage relationship, working to heal the marriage can be ineffective and even counterproductive as long as the addiction and its effects on the addict's spouse are active and unresolved. It is like pumping air into a tire that has a hole in it. As long as the hole is there, any air pumped into the tire will just leak out. The hole in the marriage needs to be repaired first as each individual gets help. Repairing the marriage relationship will come later. Counseling from a qualified therapist who specializes in sexual addiction is often useful in this process.

Spouses of addicts frequently fall into behaviors that are counterproductive to the recovery process. They may try to control or compel the addict's recovery. On the other extreme, they may be so afraid of "rocking the boat" that they will not set boundaries to protect themselves or set consequences if those boundaries are crossed. Relationships have the greatest chance of healing if the spouse focuses on her own individual recovery and well-being rather than obsessing about her spouse. The spouse of the addict also needs to set the clear boundaries and expectations with the addict as well as establish consequences if the boundaries are crossed they are not met.

55. How do I find hope and healing for myself as the spouse of an addict?

For the spouse of an addict, there are many things that can be done to more effectively handle the difficult emotions and trauma that may be experienced. The following are five elements to healing that many have found helpful:

Break the secrecy: Develop a support system and find others to safely confide in. This may include a parent, a close friend, a religious leader, and/or a therapist.

Become educated: Learn about the nature of pornography addiction. While spouses of addicts can support recovery, it is important to understand that the addict is responsible for the progression of his own addiction and it that cannot be fixed by trying to control the addict.

Practice self---care and set boundaries: Slow down and allow time before making life changing decisions. Prayerfully set boundaries defining unacceptable behavior in order to protect your emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Make time for daily physical and spiritual care.

Get Therapy: Seek appropriate personal and marital counseling.

Find a 12---Step Program: Network with the spouses of other addicts. Work the 12 steps of recovery and find a sponsor.

56. What programs and resources are available for me as the spouse of an addict?

12---Step programs: S---Anon is a 12---Step program for spouses or other family members, whose lives have been impacted by the behavior of sex addicts, including those with pornography problems. It is allied with Sexaholics Anonymous.

SA Lifeline: www.salifeline.org

57. How do I balance my need for support and healing with my desire to maintain my spouse's anonymity?

For the spouse of a pornography addict, getting the support and help needed is particularly difficult because doing so involves disclosing the addict's behavior to someone else, and thus breaking anonymity to some degree. One of the most serious side effects of a pornography addiction for the spouse of an addict is that she can either consciously or subconsciously be manipulated into remaining quiet and suffering in silence. It is important to realize that although the addict has control over his actions, he has no right to control his spouse's behavior. The addict's spouse must feel free to build a safe support network, to attend recovery meetings, and to seek appropriate counseling. The decision about how much information to disclose and to whom should be made with sensitivity and discretion. Many women find it helpful to share what they are experiencing with a trusted friend, family member, ecclesiastical leader, sponsor, or support group. Indiscriminate disclosure of a pornography addiction is not advisable and can result in adverse consequences for children and others involved.

Dating and Pornography

58. Why should I discuss pornography with the person I am dating?

In varying degrees, virtually everyone will have some exposure to pornography which affects their views of sexuality. This may range from casual exposure to serious addiction. Given the breadth of widespread promiscuity in society, it is important to discuss how each individual views and will handle pornography regardless of whether the person has previously had a problem. Openly discussing pornography can safeguard individuals and relationships. A person can be: 1) currently addicted, 2) previously addicted but now in recovery, or 3) never addicted with minimal exposure to pornography. By determining the category the other person in the dating relationship falls into, an individual can gain valuable insight concerning how to proceed appropriately with the relationship. Even if there has been minimal exposure, it is important to openly discuss pornography and set necessary boundaries to prevent future problems.

For those who have had or currently have a problem with pornography, it is very important to discuss this with any person they seriously date. Pornography use is extremely addictive and can frequently reoccur unless significant preventive measures are taken. By talking about this problem early on in a relationship, individuals can learn to develop open communication and set appropriate boundaries that will safeguard both people, help guide relationship decisions, and create a safe, trusting environment.

59. When should I discuss pornography with the person I am dating?

Some people have suggested bringing up pornography by the second date. While that is probably too soon for many, here are a few questions to help guide determinations:

Are you "exclusive" (i.e., boyfriend and girlfriend)?

Is the relationship such that you can talk or have already talked about other significant personal issues?

Are you looking to advance your relationship by becoming engaged or married?

Does your partner know and trust you enough to disclose and discuss personal challenges?

For those who cannot answer yes to any of those questions, it is probably too soon. For those who can answer yes to one or more questions, now might be an appropriate time. For those who can answer yes to all questions, it is definitely time to discuss pornography. Discussing pornography before becoming engaged is very important.

60. How should I discuss pornography with the person I am dating?

There is no easy way to bring up this uncomfortable topic. One approach is simply to ask if the other person has ever had or currently has a problem with pornography. Another way is to initially share a personal experience or talk about a related article and then move into the topic. It is important to ask what the other person's exposure to pornography has been, not if they have been exposed.

Discussions might include when and where pornography was last viewed and what the response was. Ask what is being done now to protect against pornography addiction. If an addiction has previously occurred, ask what was done to stop viewing pornography. Did the other person see a counselor or attend 12-Step meetings? Ask them if they have had any relapses. If there is a problem, it is common to receive a vague, incomplete, deflective, or less-than-honest answer. For those who have any reason to think they are not getting a complete story, trust those instincts and bring the topic up again at a later date—or consider ending the relationship. A dating partner with difficulty telling the truth about pornography has the potential to become a spouse who does not tell the truth about it after marriage.

61. What should I do if I suspect someone I am dating has a pornography problem?

The answer is simple: talk to him. Discuss any concerns or suspicions with the other person. Consider using the questions in the brochure *Pornography & Dating* to guide these discussions or see www.salifeline.org. Be careful about the speed at which the relationship progresses until recovery is solidly underway. As always, encourage anyone addicted to pornography to fully disclose his problem and get appropriate help.

62. How is dating someone with a pornography addiction likely to affect me?

Pornography causes a change in the way the user relates to others. The pornography user learns a simple, one-sided sexual response which affects feelings of closeness and intimacy. This escalates into a loss of the ability to emotionally connect with others. Instead of warmth, empathy and compassion, the user often interacts with emotional detachment and criticism. He is emotionally unavailable, and may even suggest that this detachment is the fault of the person he is dating. This can be very damaging to your self-esteem and confidence.

63. What will likely happen if I choose to marry someone with a pornography addiction?

Pornography addiction is not a problem that is fixed by marriage and marriage won't make the problem easier to fix. Additionally, this addiction will always escalate.

A person with a pornography addiction cannot build a healthy relationship. Their ability to be unselfish, compassionate, and emotionally available is severely compromised by their addiction.

64. As a recovering addict, what factors should I consider in dating?

Although graphic details are not necessary, it is important to tell the other person the nature and extent of behavior related to viewing pornography early on in the relationship. Depending on the seriousness of the relationship, encouraging the other person to see a counselor or attend a 12-Step support program may be a good idea. Consider setting boundaries regarding the speed with which the relationship progresses based upon the recovery progress. It is frequently recommended that an addict be well along in the recovery process before entering into a serious relationship. In general, being in recovery for at least 7-12 months is recommended.

65. What factors should I consider when deciding whether or not to continue a relationship with someone who is addicted or has been addicted to pornography and is in recovery?

Recognize that those addicted to pornography can change their lives, but do not underestimate the power of pornography addiction. Love for the addict requires exercising patience and setting appropriate healthy boundaries at all stages of the relationship. This may require (1) waiting to move forward in a relationship, (2) deciding to end a relationship, or (3) setting and abiding by specific rules and guidelines regarding a relationship's progression. An important factor in deciding whether to continue in a relationship is whether the person is in recovery or is actively seeking recovery from his pornography addiction. It is frequently recommended that there be at least 7-12 months of solid recovery before proceeding seriously forward. It is important that individuals understand what recovery looks like and are able to identify whether their loved one is in the recovery process.

If the other person is currently viewing pornography, it is important to proceed slowly with the relationship or to give serious consideration to ending the relationship. Be careful not to confuse emotions with the best course of action.

Dating a person with an active pornography addiction can have very serious and unexpected emotional consequences. Carefully weigh the risks of continuing in such a relationship. Carefully evaluate whether the other person acknowledges that they are addicted, is willing to take the steps required to recover, and is actively doing everything in his power to overcome this addiction. It is important to talk with trusted individuals, become educated regarding pornography addiction, and set boundaries. Additionally, attending counseling as well as 12---Step support groups may be helpful.

66. I am dating (or have dated) someone with a pornography problem and I am currently struggling with negative thoughts about myself and my appearance. What should I do?

It is not uncommon to experience some kind of trauma after being in a close relationship with a pornography addict. Common problems include anorexic or bulimic tendencies, obsession with personal appearance, feelings of low self---worth, decreased self-confidence, a feeling of spiritual darkness and abandonment, a decreased ability to trust and form healthy relationships with other men, and acceptance of unhealthy or abusive behaviors as normal.

If someone who is dating or has dated a pornography addict starts to experience any of the feelings listed above, it is important that she talk with someone. She may consider seeing a counselor and attending a 12---Step program. Getting support from a professional counselor who understands the impact of a pornography addiction is important. Talking with friends or family who can offer support and help put things in perspective is also helpful.

Prevention Technical Tools



How to Install Net Nanny



- ☐☐ Before you begin, it is a good idea to go to the Start Menu and do a Windows Update.
- ☐☐ Next, turn off all programs on your computer, especially anti-virus software (these can corrupt Net Nanny during download and installation). Make sure you are logged on to the administrator account on your computer.
- ☐☐ If you have the CD, insert it. It should start to run automatically. If it does not, double-click on the "my computer" icon and then on the CD-Rom Drive. Doubleclick the installation files.
- ☐☐ If you are downloading Net Nanny, press the "run" or "open" button when the download box appears. This will start the installation process.
- ☐☐ If you have already saved the download file, instead of opening it, locate the file you have downloaded (it may be in the folder C:WindowsTempNet NannyDisk1 or do a search on your computer for NN). Double-click this file to get the installation started.
- ☐☐ Go through the Install Wizard that pops-up. After this, your computer will reboot. You will then see a "configure Net Nanny icon" on your desktop. Double-click on this to get the configuration started. After you go through the prompts, you will see a small Net Nanny icon in your system tray (bottom right corner of your desktop).
- ☐☐ If Net Nanny asks for a name and key, enter the name and key issued to you on your order confirmation email to unlock the license. Make sure the time and date are set correctly on your computer before you enter the unlock name/key.
- ☐☐ For a quick guide to Net Nanny, please see http://www.netnanny.com/learn_center/

Comcast --- Online parental controls and PINS

Updated 8/8/2012 1:49:50 PM by Comcast Expert

Introduction

XFINITY ® TV offers online parental controls you can set up and customize in order to restrict what your children can watch on XfinityTV.com.

Set up XEinityTV.com parental controls

1. Sign in to My Account as the primary user.
2. Click Users & Preferences.
3. In your user tab, click XFINITY TV online parental controls.
4. You will be prompted to create a 4---digit Parental Control PIN.
5. Set viewing restrictions based on TV ratings, movie ratings and specific channels.
6. When you're finished, click Save in the green bar above the settings.
7. A confirmation pop---up will appear. Click Save and continue.

Your Parental Control PIN

You need your Parental Control PIN to edit or turn off XfinityTV.com restrictions. If you forget the one you set up in Step 4 above, you can get it emailed to you.

Retrieve your Parental Control PIN

1. Sign in to My Account as the primary user.
2. Click Users & Preferences.
3. In your user tab, click XFINITY TV online parental controls.
4. You will be asked to enter your password. Click I forgot my PIN.
5. A window will appear to confirm that your Parental Control PIN will be emailed to the primary user's email address.

Learn more about parental controls

These settings apply only to programming on XfinityTV.com, and are separate from general Internet security, your TV and cable box settings.

Learn more about Parental Control for your TV and online protections.

DirectTV - Parental Controls

DIRECTV helps you make family---friendly viewing decisions.

DIRECTV makes it easy for you to limit or block any programming you consider to be inappropriate for your children. The powerful Parental Controls feature, available with every DIRECTV receiver, lets you restrict unsupervised TV viewing based on rating, block specific channels, limit viewing times, and set spending limits for DIRECTV CINEMA™ movies or live Pay Per View events. Just follow these quick steps to set up Parental Controls:

If you have an HD receiver or an HD DVR

- Press MENU on your remote control
- Select SETTINGS & HELP
- Select PARENTAL CONTROLS

If you have an Standard receiver or a DVR

- Press MENU on your remote control
- Select PARENTAL, FAV'S & SETUP
- Select PARENTAL CONTROLS

To view easy step---by---step online instructions that show you how to set up Parental Controls, type the following URL address into your computers browser:

http://support.directv.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1766/~parental---controls

Dish Network ---Parental Controls

Dish Network is pleased to offer a software feature called "Adult Guard." This feature takes advantage of the built---in V---chip---type technology in our satellite receivers to offer you, the customer, another level of security with regards to Adult programming.

This feature is available for all models of receivers.

To check and see if your unit has received this new software yet, please access your system information screen using the following steps: (NOTE: Procedure may vary for different models.)

1. Press the "MENU" button.
2. Highlight the "SYSTEM SETUP" option and press "SELECT".
3. Highlight the "INSTALLATION and SETUP" option, press "SELECT".
4. Highlight the "SYSTEM INFO" option and press "SELECT".
5. The version software that your unit is running will be displayed about 1/3 of the way down the screen.
6. If the version listed is the same as (or higher than) the version listed above for your receiver, you can take advantage of this new feature. [Click Here](#) for detailed instructions.
7. If the version listed is lower than the version listed above for your receiver, you need to download the new software; follow steps 8 --- 11.
8. Turn the receiver OFF.
9. Let the receiver stay off for 5 minutes (10 minutes on the Model 4700).
10. If the new software is available, your system will automatically take the download. You will notice the green power LED come on while the system is downloading.
11. Repeat steps 1---6 to see if you now have the new software. If your receiver did not take it, new software is not up on the satellite for your model to receive it yet. Please be patient, we are working quickly to bring this feature to all of our customers.

The new "Adult Guard" feature gives you the capability to remove the "Adult" channels (Playboy, TeN, Hot Zone, ETC, Extasy) from your Electronic Program Guide. This prevents any children in the household from viewing the programming OR accessing the program information. To activate "Adult Guard," follow these simple steps. (NOTE: procedure may vary for some receivers.)

1. Press the "MENU" button.
2. Highlight the "LOCKS" option, press "SELECT."
3. Choose the "CHANNEL LOCKS" option, press "SELECT."
4. Scroll through the listed channel numbers until you find channel 490. Highlight this channel and press the "SELECT" button once. (NOTE: You should see a checkmark appear next to the channel information.)
5. Highlight the "SAVE" option, press "SELECT."
6. Highlight the "LOCK SYSTEM" option, press "SELECT."
7. Enter a 4---digit password, then highlight OK and press "SELECT."
8. Re---enter the password for confirmation, then highlight OK and press "SELECT."
9. Your system is now locked. (NOTE: this also automatically locks out the PPV channels, and requires the password to be entered to view or order PPV.)
10. Press the "GUIDE" button, notice the padlock in the upper left corner is now closed, and the adult channels are no longer listed in the guide.

MOBICIP --- How to Setup Parental Controls on iPhone & iPod Touch

Here is a step---by---step guide to setup parental control restrictions on the iPhone or iPod Touch with iOS 4 & iOS 5. Though this page is long, the steps are generally intuitive and easy to follow. This article was also published as part of a popular Google Knol collection. If you prefer, catch the video tutorial on YouTube instead.

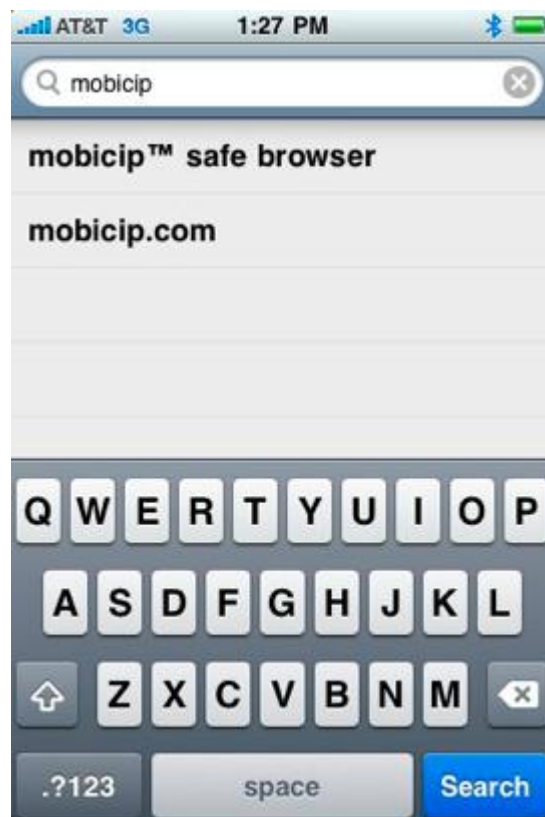
Mobicip Safe Browser Setup

Mobicip Safe Browser Setup Mobicip™ offers a best---selling alternate browser for Safari that enables parental controls on your child's iPhone or iPod Touch. It is simple to setup and works anytime anywhere! The Mobicip Safe Browser is protected by a mobicip.com account setup by the parent.

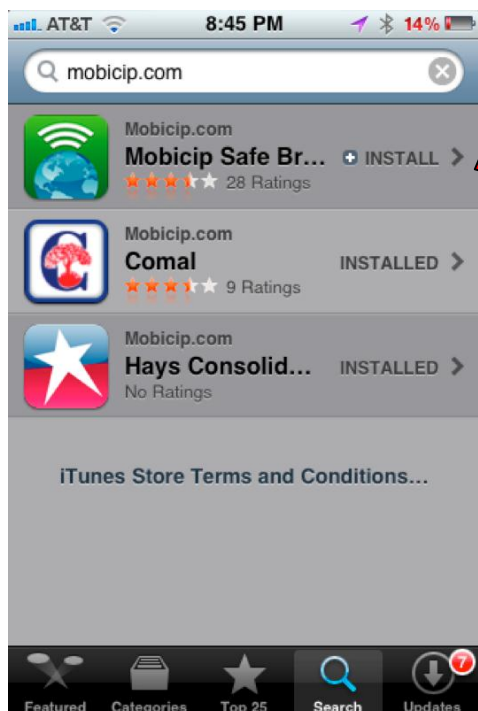
From the home screen on the device, touch the App Store icon.



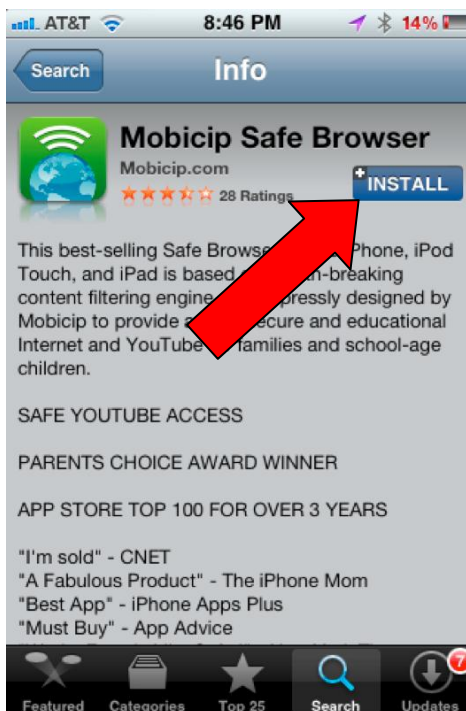
Touch the search tab, and search for "mobicip"



Select the Mobicip Safe Browser from the search results



Touch the price button, it will turn into BUY NOW. Touch this button and enter your iTunes username and password



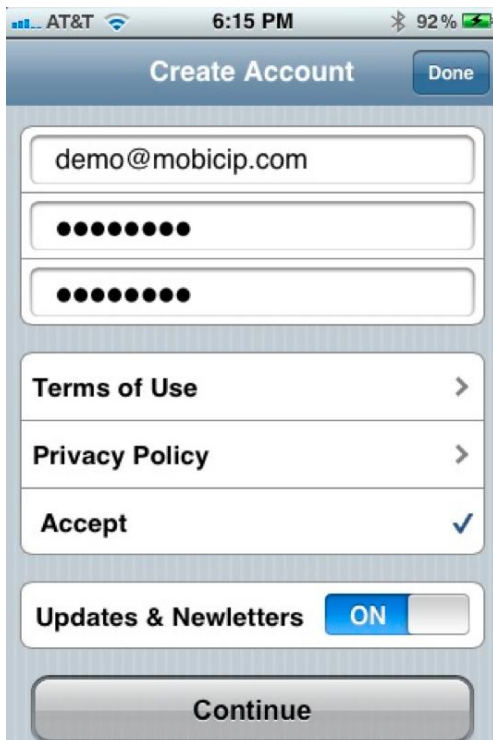
Once downloaded, the app will be installed on your screen.



When installation is done, touch the Mobicip icon to launch the app.



Go through the steps below to create the account and setup the filtering



AT&T 6:15 PM 92%

Create Account Done

demo@mobicip.com

•••••

•••••

Terms of Use >

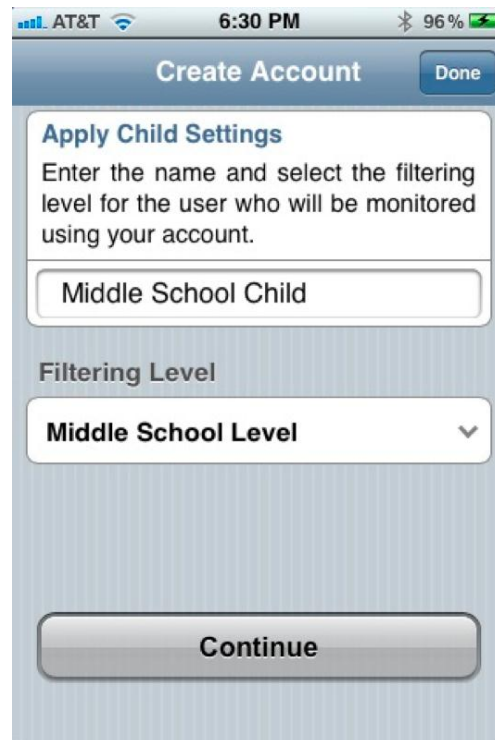
Privacy Policy >

Accept ✓

Updates & Newsletters ON

Continue

Account creation setup --- continued.



AT&T 6:30 PM 96%

Create Account Done

Apply Child Settings

Enter the name and select the filtering level for the user who will be monitored using your account.

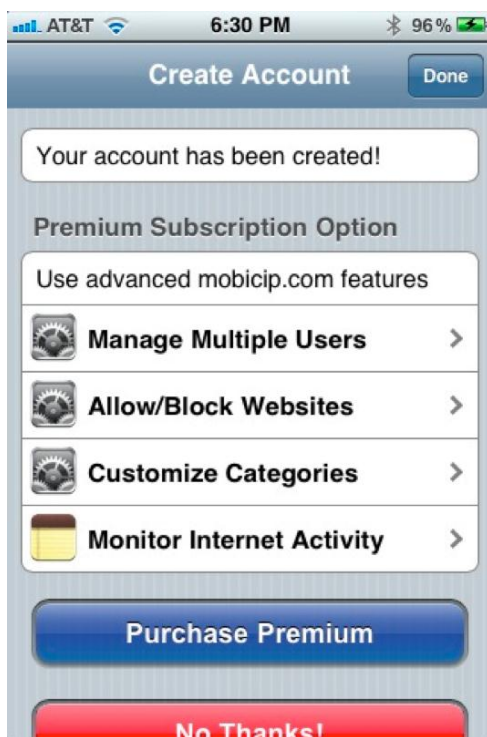
Middle School Child

Filtering Level

Middle School Level ▾

Continue

At this point, you can decide if you wish to upgrade to a Premium subscription.



AT&T 6:30 PM 96%

Create Account Done

Your account has been created!

Premium Subscription Option

Use advanced mobicip.com features

Manage Multiple Users >

Allow/Block Websites >

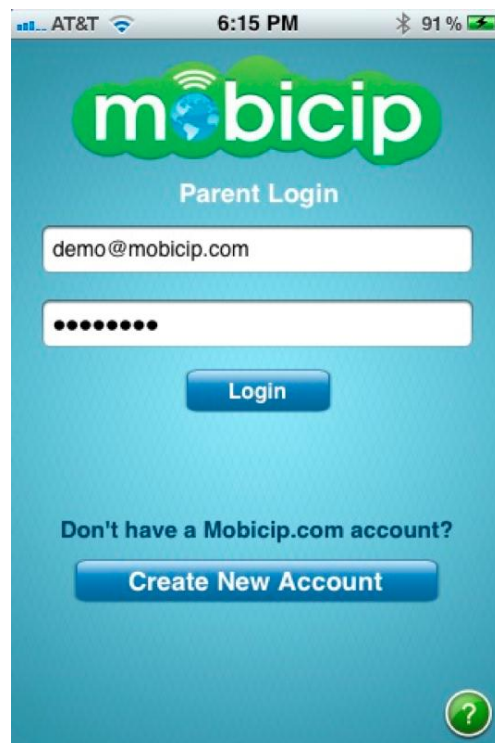
Customize Categories >

Monitor Internet Activity >

Purchase Premium

No Thanks!

In either case, press Done to return to the Login screen. Now you can enter your username / password to enable Mobicip.



AT&T 6:15 PM 91%

mobicip

Parent Login

demo@mobicip.com

•••••

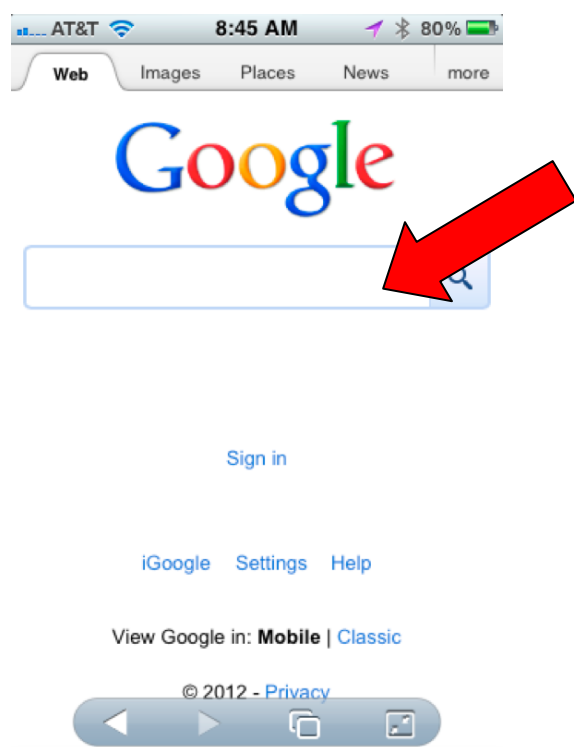
Login

Don't have a Mobicip.com account?

Create New Account

?

You should see the browser open up.
Enter a URL to visit any website.



Visit www.mobicip.com from your PC to upgrade to the Mobicip.com Premium web application. Mobicip.com Premium is a web-based parental control application that can be accessed from any browser. The Premium application allows you to setup custom Internet filtering settings and policy, and monitor Internet usage on the iPhone and iPod Touch that uses Mobicip as the primary browser.

General Parental Control Restrictions Setup

From the home screen on your iPhone, select **Settings > General**.



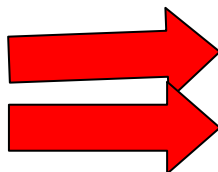
Select Restrictions



Enter a 4---digit passcode. Make sure you remember this passcode, in case



You will see the restrictions screen set Safari and YouTube to OFF on this screen.
NOTE: Some parents may choose to allow



UPDATE: With iOS 4.2, Apple has added additional features to make the restrictions even more useful. If you have upgraded already, please do so now. iOS 4.2 includes an option to prevent the deletion of apps installed by the parent or administrator.



In another much sought after enhancement, Apple has added an option to disallow email accounts from being setup. Whether you have setup a child---friendly email service like Zilladog or Zoobuh, or you simply want to turn off email access, this gives you the ability to lock email accounts and not allow your child to setup an alternate email account. Simply scroll down on the same Restrictions screen to setup this option.



We believe that these are valuable additions and that there is enough reason to upgrade your iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad to iOS 4.2.

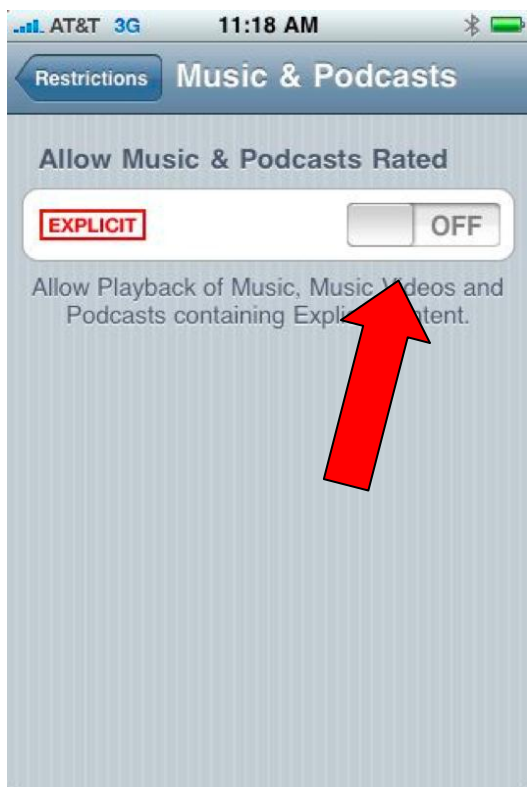
Scroll down the screen to the Allowed Content area.



Set In-App Purchases to OFF.



Select Music & Podcasts. Set Explicit to OFF.



Select Movies. Select the rating you would like to allow.



Select TV Shows. Select the rating you would like to allow.



Select Apps. Select age-based filtering for apps you would like to allow.



Select Ratings For to change your location if necessary.



Hit the Home button to return the home screen.

NOTE: If you have multiple devices to setup, see this article.

That is it! You can be rest assured that your child will have a safe and secure Internet enabled device that he/she can use anytime anywhere!

Self-Pornography Issues



The following are Action Items if you are involved in pornography:

- Acknowledge the Problem
- Seek assistance from
 - o Family members
 - o Counselors
- Make Adjustments
- Be Accountable to a Third Party for your Behavior
- Abandon the Behavior

I think I may have a problem - what should I do?

"In looking back, many of us see that regardless of how, why, or when it began, there came a time when we were not only aware of the power this thing held over us, but that we were acting against our will. Only when we tried stopping did we see that we were captive to a force stronger than we, at the mercy of a power greater than ourselves." (White Book, Sexaholics Anonymous)

Most everyone who is troubled by their pornography use asks the question, "Am I addicted?" A man attending a 12---step recovery group for sexual addiction stated, "I finally figured out that the reason I needed to quit was because I couldn't. I hated what it was doing to me, but every time I quit I ended up going back."

Take the Quiz.

If you question whether your pornography use is a problem or has become an addiction, answer the following questions to determine if you need help.

- Have you ever promised yourself you would never view pornography again?
- Do you decide that you're going to quit looking at pornography, or cut down, and change your mind?
- Do you plan your day so that you can make sure that is an opportunity to view pornography?
- Do you resort to viewing pornography to escape, relieve anxiety, or avoid other issues?
- Do you feel guilt, remorse, low self-esteem, regret or depression after viewing pornography?
- Do you feel like your sexual thoughts and/or behaviors are causing problems in your life?
- Do you feel the "right relationship" would help you stop? In other words, is this a problem that you feel others can fix, but you are not controlling on your own?
- Is the amount of time you spend viewing pornography increasing or taking the place of things you should be doing?
- Are you less connected with important aspects of your life, such as friends, work, school and family responsibilities, because of the role pornography plays?
- Does viewing pornography ever take priority over things which you're expected to do or need to get done?
- Is the material viewed becoming more graphic or your behavior becoming more involved?
- Do you ever avoid questions or lie to hide your pornography behavior? Are you leading a double life?



Simply put, you have a problem if pornography is negatively impacting your life and you are not stopping. Many people viewing pornography, like drug users, tell themselves they can stop and their behavior is not causing problems. However, if you tell yourself that you are not going to look at pornography anymore and then you find yourself doing it anyway, you probably need help. Pornography addicts return to thinking about, planning for and participating in secret behaviors that take priority over other healthy relationships and important activities. If you think you may have a problem, you likely do.

What do you want? Ask yourself - do I want to be struggling with this problem in ten years, or do I want to look back on this as a painful learning experience which I haven't visited for ten years? After you have decided that recovery is for you, that you truly want to break the chains, the time has come for the next questions which are closely related to the first: What am I willing to do? How far am I willing to go? In answering these questions we come to the fundamental question at hand: How does one change from being addicted to a person firm in recovery with years of sobriety?

What are the Stages of Pornography Addiction?

Pornography addiction is progressive. This means that in order to get the same pleasure or rush, pornography use has to escalate. Below is the common pattern of escalation

- **Early exposure.** Initial exposure to pictures or provocative material. The exposure is frequently accidental or may result from general curiosity. The problem begins when the person deliberately begins viewing pornography.
- **Addiction.** The person keeps returning to pornography. They recognize their activity as inappropriate, but regardless of what they resolve to do, it becomes a regular part of their life. The user begins to depend on pornography as their main source of 'feeling good.' The time spent viewing material continues to increase despite the consequences. Periods of abstinence may be followed by periods of binging.
- **Escalation.** The person starts to look for more graphic material. The images they now view might have disgusted them initially. They spend even more time looking at pornography and thinking about it becomes consuming. They may want their spouse to "act out" things that they have seen in pornography in their sexual relationship
- **Desensitization.** Eventually, the person becomes numbed to the effects of the pornography. They are in denial about their addiction and begin to see pornography and the sexual acts depicted as "normal" and acceptable. Even the most graphic, degrading pornography doesn't excite them anymore. They become desperate to feel the same thrill again but can't find it.
- **Acting out.** At this point, addicts make a dangerous jump and start acting out sexually with other people. Rather than limiting their exposure to images and experiences on the internet, they begin to act out the sexual fantasies they have seen. Their acting out may take the form of exhibitionism, voyeurism, promiscuity, strip clubs, sex with minors, soliciting prostitutes, or rape.

Wisdom from the Sexaholics Anonymous White Book

“There is an attractive healing atmosphere in confidential, anonymous 12---step meetings when someone is transparent and self---revealing at depth. Vulnerable and like a child, we take the supreme risk of exposing the truth about ourselves, dark as it may be. We speak of our weakness because that’s where we’re hurting, and THIS becomes the point of our identification with each other, the point of true union. Once this single ray of truth and light shines in a meeting, it finds ready reception and response in the others present. Honesty is catching; we’re learning to walk in the light.” White Book, Sexaholics Anonymous

Our problem is physical, emotional and spiritual. Healing must come about in all three areas. The crucial change in attitude began when we admitted that our habit had us whipped. We came to 12---step meetings and we discovered we could stop, that not feeding the hunger didn’t kill us, that sex was indeed optional. There was hope for freedom, and we began to feel alive.

Encouraged to continue, we turned more and more away from our isolating obsession with sex and self and turned to God and others. All this was scary. We found that others had traveled this path before. Learning a new way to surrender to God’s power, we found this surrender was killing the obsession! We had stepped into the light, into a whole new way of life. The safety of fellowship with others in recovery gave us monitoring and support to keep us from being overwhelmed. Instead of covering for feelings with compulsive sex, we began exposing the roots of our spiritual emptiness and hunger. And the healing began.

Facing our character defects we became willing to change. As defects were surrendered we began to be more comfortable with ourselves and others for the first time without our “drug”. We tried to right our wrongs and at each amends the dreadful load of guilt dropped from our shoulders until we could lift our heads, look the world the eye and stand free. We were learning how to give; and the measure we gave was the measure we got back. We were finding what none of the substitutes had ever supplied. We were making the real Connection. We were home. Adapted from the SA White Book

The White Book: Part 1, section 3: The spiritual basis of addiction

- I became aware of the power this thing had over me and that I was actually acting against my will
- The addictive process involves the most fundamental aspect of our being, our spirit which is the combination of all our attitudes, choices, thoughts and behavior
- Under the surface we are seething with resentment, hostility, anger, envy, rebellion and rage. We use these feelings to create a change of heart which allows our addictive behavior
- As we make the conscious choices setting into motion the addictive process, we become increasingly selfish and self---centered. We become increasingly closed off and defensive, unteachable and willful
- Even though part of us knew the habit controlled us, it was often the one thing in our lives we thought we were controlling.

What does “sobriety” mean?

For those attending meetings of Sexaholics Anonymous, sobriety is defined as “having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse.” (White Book, pg 191---192.) In addition, true sexual sobriety “includes progressive victory over lust[,]...the driving force behind ... sexual acting out.” (White Book, pg 191---192.) Physical sobriety is not an end in itself but a means towards an end-victory over the obsession and progress in recovery....In practical terms, we stop entertaining lustful fantasy. We stop using the internet to look for pornography images....We choose a different route to avoid places where lust triggered us or we acted out.....If we are going to a business or event where we know there will be lust or sexual triggers (such as a supermarket, mall, or an airport), we call someone....If we are uncomfortable in any given situation, we simply leave.....Our sobriety becomes the most important thing each day in every circumstance.

Recovery is a Spiritual Experience

“We use the words spiritual in referring to that aspect of ourselves underlying and determining all our attitudes, choices, thoughts, and behavior---the very core of personality, the very heart of the person. If we can see how the addictive process involves this most fundamental aspect of our being, we will be able to understand why recovery---whatever else we make it---must be a spiritual process.” White Book Sexaholics Anonymous

A Road Map for Recovery, Leaving Pornography Addiction and Discovering Life

Segments from April 30, 2010 By SA Lifeline Foundation
by [Geoff Steurer](#), MS, LMFT
Director, LifeSTAR of St. George, Utah

“This will be the last time”

“It wasn’t as bad as other stuff I’ve seen” “It’s not

like I look at it everyday”

These self--reassuring statements are a small sampling of comments I hear from men who struggle with viewing pornography. They wonder if they are really addicted. Many of them hide in secrecy for years trying to resolve the unwanted behaviors on their own. The secret struggle often creates more hopelessness and feelings of powerlessness over this mysterious force that seems to keep sabotaging their best efforts.

In their pain and frustration, many of them ask me the following questions:

How can I tell if I am really addicted to pornography?

How do I know if I really need to get help for my behavior?

What’s involved in overcoming these unwanted behaviors?

I will answer these questions in an attempt to outline a road map for understanding and overcoming an addiction to pornography and discovering a new way of living life.

Simply stated, 1) if you want to stop the behavior, 2) but you can’t, and 3) the behaviors are causing life--damaging consequences, 4) then you’re probably addicted.

It’s common to wonder if addiction only counts for those guys who look at pornography multiple times per day. While this is certainly a pattern of addiction, the definition can also apply to a much broader type of behavioral pattern.

For example, I’ve worked with individuals who look at pornography only three times per year. One might look at this sporadic pattern and wonder how three viewings of pornography in one year’s time could be considered an addiction. Let’s look at what three viewings per year could do to such an individual.

First, he’s going to keep his behavior a secret from others because he’s embarrassed about it. This

secrecy is going to produce shame. Shame is a feeling of being broken, damaged, or defective. He might briefly say things to himself like, what's my problem? Why do I keep going back to this when I know it's wrong?" His shame is going to produce anxiety and depression that will be difficult to ignore. He will have to create a "false self" for others to see so they don't wonder if he is someone who looks at pornography. His false self will make it difficult to genuinely connect with his wife [and] his children . . . He will worry about being discovered. He worries what others will think of him if they ever discover his secret behaviors. He always feels like he's not as good as other guys who don't appear to struggle. The shame and stress will create a low-grade misery that will be difficult to escape.

Sounds pretty life-damaging to me!

While there are varying degrees of intensity on the continuum of pornography addiction, even occasional viewings of pornography can deeply affect an individual. It's not only the images of pornography that change the way men view women and close relationships. The secret shame and stress associated with violating one's own standards of conduct on a repeated basis also causes individuals to live far beneath their . . . potential.

The anxiety surrounding the definition of addiction is usually linked to the fear of being labeled a "pervert" or "weirdo". In actuality, when an individual stops fighting the worry about labels and starts moving toward a life of sincere recovery, he won't care what label applies to his situation.

The freedom and joy he will experience as he releases the shameful secrecy and pain of self-betrayal will wash out lesser fears linked to how others might perceive him.

How do I know if I really need to get help for my behavior?

Men who struggle with pornography problems usually do so in isolation despite their best intentions and efforts to quit. In their isolation, they make deals with themselves such as, "if I slip one more time, then I'll get help", or "let's see how the next week goes and then I'll decide if I need to get help". These mental gymnastics keep the individual stuck in their old patterns of addiction because they continue to make up new rules and exceptions. In other words, the line of accountability keeps moving.

Dr. Mark Laaser, a noted author and therapist on the subject of sexual addiction, always asks his clients the following question when he begins his work with them: "Do you want to get well?" He says that if the individual can't answer that question, then he will have difficulty helping them. It's my belief that if the answer to the question is "yes", then breaking out of isolation to get help will be much easier.

I encourage men I work with to do some self-education on the topic of pornography addiction so they can begin to understand the landscape of recovery. I want them to understand what it will take for them to undo the grip of pornography and make long-term lifestyle changes. Virtually every guy I've worked with tells me they initially underestimated how much help they needed.

A person who truly wants to be rid of their behavior will do everything they can to completely eliminate the unwanted behaviors. Although asking for help will produce momentary embarrassment, the long-term benefits of a life without pornography are worth the effort.

Sometimes people approach recovery with the desire to eliminate the problematic behavior without considering how the problem became so unmanageable in the first place. Stopping the

behavior is actually the easiest part of recovery. The long-term changes associated with undoing the thinking patterns that create the addiction is a much deeper process.

Dallin H. Oaks [from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] explained it as follows, “A person [with a pornography addiction] is like a tree that bends easily in the wind. On a windy and rainy day, the tree bends so deeply against the ground that the leaves become soiled with mud... If we focus only on cleaning the leaves, the weakness in the tree that allowed it to bend and soil its leaves may remain. Similarly, a person who is merely sorry to be soiled by [their addiction] will [slip] again in the next high wind. The susceptibility to repetition continues until the tree has been strengthened.”

Since recovery is more than just stopping unwanted behaviors, it’s critical to enlist the help of others who can offer support in the form of education, accountability, and encouragement.

What’s involved in overcoming these unwanted behaviors?

I’ve broken down the process of recovery from pornography addiction into the following stages. Each will be explained briefly.

1. Step into the light
2. Transform the behavior
3. Discover life without pornography
4. The long---term recovery journey

Step Into the Light

When an individual views pornography in secrecy, those behaviors usually continue to stay secret. There is tremendous effort exerted to ensure that the behaviors are not discovered.

This secrecy puts tremendous emotional pressure on the individual which reinforces the need to continue viewing pornography. The most powerful ways to break out of this cycle of secrecy is to “step into the light” and tell someone else about the secret behaviors.

Who is the safest person to tell? Consider the following suggestions: The confidant should be someone who 1) can keep confidences, 2) is helpful and encouraging, and 3) will be around to offer support long-term.

If an individual is married, their spouse needs to be at the top of the list . . . Trusted friends, parents, or counseling professionals are also important supports to consider.

This is often the most difficult step due to embarrassment and fear. It’s likely that the fear of being discovered has been around since the individual had their first exposure to pornography. For many people, this first exposure happened in early adolescence.

Virtually every individual I've worked with has felt tremendous relief in their first meeting with me after telling their story of struggling with pornography. They describe feeling a literal release of the terrible burden of secrecy that has been with them for years. They finally have a taste of what life will be like without the additional weight of their secret behaviors. There is a tendency for those who struggle to want to tell only a portion of the secret behaviors.

This is what I call "spotlighting" behavior. While spotlighting is certainly better than keeping others entirely in the dark, it doesn't allow the full scope of the problem to be resolved. Turning on all of the lights allows the entire problem to be understood more completely.

It's important for those struggling with pornography addiction to complete a full inventory of secret behaviors that will eventually be shared with a trusted confidant. Most 12---step programs have excellent information on how to create a full inventory.

If an individual is married, sharing this inventory with their spouse can often be a delicate and sensitive process. Some spouses can be traumatized by too much detail early in recovery. I highly recommend reading a book on disclosure such as "Discussing Pornography Problems with a Spouse" by Dan Gray and Rory Reid or "Disclosing Secrets" by Jennifer Schneider and Debra Corely for further information on this topic.

Transform the Behavior

It's important to use the momentum generated from disclosure to power through the behavioral transformation phase. As stated earlier, this is actually the easiest part of the recovery journey. Behavioral change will often come quickly (within a few months) and will give much---needed encouragement and hope to continue in long---term recovery. This is the time for an individual to experience the successful transformation of how they understand their relationship with triggers and sexual urges.

This transformation phase requires a tremendous amount of education, practicing certain skills, and connecting with a support system. If there has been a history of viewing pornography, the brain and body have been programmed to respond to sexual triggers in a predictable way over the years. It will take dedicated practice to re-route these tendencies. The good news is that the brain can be healed with committed effort!

The specifics of how to create these behavioral changes is beyond the scope of this article. I recommend seeking out professionals who are trained in treating pornography addiction to help with this stage of recovery. There are structured ways to learn how to implement these new ways of thinking and behaving.

Discover Life Without Pornography

This phase of treatment is often bittersweet experience for those who pass through it. The "bitter" part is the withdrawal from the powerful chemical high associated with pornography addiction. This can often take weeks to overcome. Some individuals experience strong physiological withdrawal symptoms that can create irritability, insomnia, fatigue, and other bothersome symptoms.

Like detoxification from drugs or alcohol, denying the body the regular bursts of dopamine, serotonin, adrenaline, and other chemicals associated with pornography addiction will create powerful physical cravings. This withdrawal will begin in the initial stages of recovery, but can last longer, depending on the individual's history of pornography use.

I encourage individuals to lean into the pain of withdrawal and rely on their tools and support gained in the transformation phase to help train their brain learn to live without the chemical cocktail associated with their addiction.

Withdrawal can also create a feeling of loss and confusion about how to live life without the addiction. It can feel like mourning the death of an old friend. This loss will eventually disappear as the individual pushes forward in their recovery efforts and discovers new ways to do life without the influence of the addiction.

The “sweet” part of this stage is the newfound awareness of how enjoyable life can be without pornography! There are some exciting discoveries in this phase of recovery. For example, the five senses become more active and engaged with the world. I have clients tell me that they can feel, see, and hear things that they never noticed before. They are often amazed at how much pornography numbed-out their senses. They start to re-connect with . . . their families and with themselves. As an individual becomes re-sensitized to life, they will experience additional motivation to continue in their recovery journey.

The Long-Term Recovery Journey

Recovery can be compared to launching a satellite into orbit. It takes tremendous energy to get a rocket out of the pull of earth's gravity. As the rocket gains momentum, less power is needed to put it into its desired orbit.

Eventually, the satellite is released into orbit and only requires small and consistent bursts of energy to keep it positioned in orbit. The satellite will stay in its correct orbit as long as those consistent corrections are applied.

Early recovery is often full of intensity, energy, and earth-shaking changes. Long-term recovery looks nothing like this. Instead, it's made up of finely-tuned course corrections that keep the individual positioned in a healthy lifestyle. If an individual is constantly battling triggers and relapses, they will never get to really enjoy life and experience the long-term growth available to them.

Most individuals will pass through the first three stages of recovery within 6-12 months. The behavioral changes in these stages create stability necessary to do the long-term work of relapse prevention and life changes. As stated previously in the metaphor of the wind and tree, this stage is the work of strengthening the trunk of the tree.

Individuals risk becoming over-confident at this point in recovery. They often believe that they've “arrived” and don't need to work as hard. While they have most certainly arrived at a new place of living life, it's important to maintain their gains and understand clearly how to keep building a life free from the destructive pull of pornography.

Recovery is the process of restoring things to their proper state, creating a fresh view of oneself and one's relationships, and healing the sources of pain that created the need for the addiction in the first place.

It's critical to maintain the same system of support during this stage of recovery for regular accountability and close support. Support systems can provide much-needed feedback and observations as the individual creates the long-term adjustments critical to their full recovery.

Conclusion

A man lost in a large city stopped to ask for directions. He wondered if he was so far off course that reaching his destination would be impossible. The individual helping him reassured him with these words, "Don't worry—you can get there from here." Regardless of how an individual believes they've strayed from their goal to be healed from the effects of pornography addiction, they can get to full recovery by following the road map of a structured recovery.

Regardless of how deep they believe their addiction has taken them, they can use the same agency that put them in the addiction to help them get out of the addiction. Stopping, asking for help, and carefully following the steps of recovery will make life without pornography a reality.

And the best news is that healing from an addiction to pornography not only offers an individual an opportunity to stop life-damaging behaviors, but also creates a completely new way of living life. Individuals who commit to full recover will discover a new version of themselves previously unimagined.

Geoff Steurer is a licensed marriage and family therapist in private practice in St. George, Utah. He has over 10 years of experience working as a marriage and family therapist in a variety of clinical settings. He is the executive director of LifeSTAR of St. George, Utah, a nationally renowned three-phase addiction recovery program for couples and individuals affected by pornography and sexual addiction (www.lifestarnetwork.org). He has a list of books, articles, and other resources related to addiction recovery on his LifeSTAR of St. George, Utah website: www.lifestarstgeorge.com. Geoff frequently writes and presents on the subjects of marriage and addiction recovery. Many of these articles and presentations are available to download on his website www.lovingmarriage.com.

Spouse- Pornography Issues



The following are Action Items if your spouse is involved in pornography:

- Recognize your pain. Do not try to hide or mask it.
- Approach your spouse about the pornography use
- If necessary, seek assistance from counselors
- Learn how to combat pornography addiction together
- Plan to support your spouse in recovery
- Establish with your spouse appropriate boundaries and safeguards in your home

Drawing Together When Pornography Threatens to Tear Apart Your Marriage

Segments

By Mark Chamberlain, PhD, and Rebecca Jorgensen, PhD

Ben saw that Kristy's eyes were red the moment he arrived home from work. He asked what was wrong. Her response was terse: "We'll talk after the kids are in bed." Later, as she tried to choke back fresh tears, Kristy handed Ben a stack of papers, a list of hundreds of websites he'd visited and topics he'd searched for—evidence that Ben had a serious pornography problem. "I've been faithful to you our entire marriage and thought only about sex with you. I've always assumed that the same was true for you, that you loved me the same way!" she said.

Ben felt like his heart was going to break. How could he have done this to his wife? Then he felt panicky. What if this ruined their relationship? He just had to convince her that her fears about what this all meant were not justified. He tried to reassure her that he loved her genuinely and deeply. He explained that he was frequently tempted to view pornography, but not because he wanted sex with other women, not because he desired the women in the pictures more than he desired her. Facing this crisis, Ben knew that he absolutely had to do what he'd been trying to do for years: finally give up pornography. He vowed to Kristy that he would never view it again.

Throughout the next month, Kristy felt like the ache in her heart wouldn't go away. Even worse, she felt alone with her hurt and feared that Ben didn't really care about her. She tried to convey to Ben how devastating his pornography habit was to her, how doubtful she had become about her attractiveness to him, how unsure she'd become of herself and of their relationship, and the way this had all turned her once-secure world upside-down. Her fear also led her to watch Ben's every move and question his activities. Ben, in turn, tried to reassure her that he was still the same man she'd fallen in love with, that all of the good things she "thought" she'd experienced throughout the years were real. He felt constantly horrible for his behavior and wondered, "What's the matter with me?" When Kristy asked him questions, the awful shame of what he'd done stirred inside. He wanted to get her away from his bad memories so she wouldn't feel the way about him that he felt about himself. He really didn't know how to talk to her; the feelings were so raw he just froze inside.

Ben and Kristy both continued in earnest to try in their own way to make things better, but it seemed things only got worse. By the time they came in for counseling, what had begun as a serious crisis was now threatening to destroy their entire relationship. They had separated, and

Kristy was considering filing for divorce. Ben felt like he was walking on eggshells and could no longer do anything right in Kristy's eyes. Kristy felt like Ben didn't understand her pain—and worse, didn't want to.

Kristy and Ben are like so many couples who come to see us. The men are sincerely trying to overcome their pornography habits. Even more desperately, they want to save their marriages. In an attempt to get things back on track, a husband typically:

- Tries to calm his wife's fears by explaining to her his true feelings.
- Focuses their conversations on other topics that are less painful to her.
- Hopes she'll be reassured by all of his efforts to repent and do better.

Wives are just as intent on salvaging their relationships. In an effort to do just that, quite often a wife will:

- Express her heartache and fears, in hopes that he'll understand how devastating this problem has been to her.
- Initiate discussions about the problem, its evolution, and the aspects and events that she still doesn't understand.
- Seek reassurance that he loves her and finds her attractive.

Unfortunately, one partner's attempts to make things better may be at odds with the other's sense of where things need to go. As a result, husbands and wives can end up putting all their effort into cross-purposes. For instance, let's say she's hoping they'll get to the point where they can talk openly about the problem, while he really wants to get to the point where they've moved past it. To him, her efforts seem counterproductive, and vice-versa. As she becomes more adamant about the need to talk, he tries to avoid the topic more. Rather than feeling understood, she feels dismissed. She concludes that he doesn't take the problem seriously enough. She wonders if his sinful behavior has deadened his conscience and impaired his capacity to empathize with her pain. He fears that she's becoming obsessed about the problem, he's fighting this by himself because it's "his problem," and he wonders if he'll ever be able to redeem himself in her eyes.

Although couples in this situation might start out frustrated and upset, over time they can learn to work together to resolve even thorny problems like a husband's pornography habit. They can begin to see that their spouse is just trying to do for the relationship what they think it needs most, escalating their efforts when they feel stymied. As couples come to understand each other more fully, they can ease away from familiar, unproductive automatic responses. Each becomes more able to recognize what the other genuinely wants and needs—and more able to provide it. Here are some of the shifts we've seen that seem to help couples work more productively together:

The husband comes to understand that it's a good thing his wife keeps coming to him with her hurt. It's a great sign that instinctively she regards him as the one who can help her feel better about it. As we're fond of saying, "If your wife comes to you, it's because she intuitively trusts that you and only you can help her heal—not a family member, friend, or another man. It's you she wants to share with and feel validation from."

He comes to see that it's more important to be with her in pain than to try to make it go away. Being together in the pain is what helps it heal.

Both husband and wife come to understand that the worst part for her may not be the pain of what he's done, but the feeling that she's facing her pain alone because he's not connecting deeply with her when she tries to convey it.

She realizes that he may have been avoiding the topic precisely because it hurts him so badly to see her hurt. It is difficult for him to face her pain head on.

She comes to understand that he feels like he doesn't measure up, he may feel unworthy to comfort her, and he fears her rejection. He may have been hoping that if he gave her space, honored her in other ways, and focused on the good things they shared, she might stop focusing on this heart-wrenching topic and feel better about the relationship. This may be his way of trying to help heal her pain.

He learns to trust that honesty, including emotional honesty, throughout recovery is more important even than avoiding pornography—not to minimize how crucial that is. The more honest and open he becomes, the more included she feels. As she feels more included, his pornography problem is no longer a part of his life she is left out of. They become a team fighting together against the habit, rather than letting the pornography come between them.

He comes to treat her as a resource in his recovery. She can help him understand the emotions and needs that previously have built up and were released in pornography use.

She discovers that although sex becomes the focus when he's tempted, most of his everyday needs are emotional in nature. Thus she begins to feel less threatened, and rather than viewing him as an enemy or "pervert" she can't relate to, she sees him as an ally.

In counseling Ben learned to relax and take a few deep breaths when temptation hit instead of bracing against it or trying to fight it. He learned to use the temptation as a flag that he was stressed and needed to talk to someone or do something to reduce his stress. Solving the problem of how to manage his stress became something to focus on besides sexual thoughts and urges. At the same time he started counseling, Ben began attending the Sexaholics Anonymous meetings that were held once a week at a church near his office. He started to admit that he had been powerless to resolve his addiction on his own. At first it felt foreign to him to "surrender" and rely on God's help; he had always seen this problem as one he had to conquer on his own or push through. Over time, he experienced a growing sense of strength and peace when he turned to God. He felt that Heavenly Father accepted him even in the midst of his struggle, and Ben went to Him more in times of need.

In the 12-step group meetings, Ben heard other attendees talk about the importance of "rigorous honesty." He remembered how distraught Kristy had been when she talked about feeling he had violated her trust. He knew that his secrecy had been a big part of not only her trust, but his problem. Ben resolved to be completely honest with Kristy about his struggles and feelings from then on.

Now that the problem was out in the open and he and Kristy were working together on it, Ben experienced fewer cravings than he had before. As time wore on, however, the old urges to view pornography started to hit him again. On tough days, he'd let Kristy know about it. Although she appreciated his openness, she was concerned that he was struggling.

During one counseling session, it was apparent there was unresolved tension between them. “I told her I was struggling,” Ben said. “She asked for more information. I wasn’t sure whether or not I should tell her. I knew it might hurt her if I told the truth.” In an effort to be rigorously honest, he told her that while driving around in his van for work that afternoon, he had stopped at a traffic light. A black convertible pulled up next to him with an attractive woman at the wheel. “I hate to admit it, but I started to fantasize about her. I told Kristy about it. She was upset. Then she wanted to know more about the fantasy, but it was just a brief lapse, a wandering of my mind. It wasn’t that detailed. But Kristy assumed I wouldn’t tell her more because she was upset. She thought I was holding back. I tried to think back and see if any other thoughts had come into my mind. But then my mind was on that topic again, thinking sexual thoughts about a strange woman. I told Kristy that I didn’t think it was good for us to dwell on it.”

“He told me it wasn’t a good idea for him to dwell on it,” Kristy said. “Of course it isn’t. That’s exactly why I’m so frustrated with him. Why does he keep doing it?”

Many things can trigger unwanted sexual thoughts in someone who has a history of sexually acting out. Stress, feeling isolated, visual cues, and even boredom are common triggers. Sexual thoughts are like a lightning rod. They can draw all of our energy and attention. They are a powerful symptom of an inner struggle. However, when we dwell on the symptom we can miss the cause and more importantly, the cure. Being honest about having sexual thoughts is one part of honesty, but it’s not the biggest part, nor the most important . . .

We encourage clients like Ben to pay attention inwardly, to be on the lookout for other feelings and needs that might be in play when sexual urges hit. If he feels lonely because he’s out driving

on his own all day, it might be a relief to think about sex instead. However, those sexual thoughts

are obscuring something much more important. He needs to be honest with himself, rigorously honest, by acknowledging the loneliness. The sexual thoughts are closer to the surface. It’s easier

—and may seem manlier—to feel sexually interested or aroused. It’s more difficult to admit more vulnerable feelings and softer inner experiences. He needs to start by being honest with himself about what he’s feeling before he can be deeply honest with his wife.

The next time Ben told Kristy he had been tempted that day, she saw the usual bait, but she didn’t take it. Instead of asking about the content of his tempting thoughts, she was more interested in what, in particular, had happened that day to make him vulnerable. “What had your day been like up to that point?” she asked.

“Kind of a drag, I guess,” Ben responded.

“What was going on inside for you?” Kristy asked. Ben pondered her question and thought back.

He couldn't put his finger on anything. Still, that brief discussion helped him to feel hopeful and cared about and to be on the lookout the next time temptation hit. He was in a more curious frame of mind a few days later when illicit thoughts kept popping into his mind. "Sex is the most attention-grabbing feeling, but what else is going on for me?" he wondered. "I'm driving around replacing copier toner cartridges, and it's boring. I know that's part of it. It's hard to see people driving around in nice cars. I go into offices with all of these sharp professionals. Am I envious? Seems like they have important things to do and places to be. Do I feel less important than them? Sometimes I wish I'd stayed in school and earned my degree. I don't feel like I'm living up to

my potential." Ben's forehead was getting warm and there was a lump in his throat. "I worry that other people look down on me. I guess that's why it's nice when women find me attractive. It makes me feel like I still have it, like I'm worth paying attention to, that I'm admired and important, like I have something to offer."

Ben knew immediately that it would be much tougher to be honest with Kristy about these feelings. After the kids were down that night, he talked to her about what he had felt that afternoon. As he did, the feelings came back. Sitting on the side of the bed, he looked down at the floor as he shared his self-doubts. "Part of it is that you were with your old boyfriend for three and a half years before we got together. His business is thriving now." Ben's throat almost wouldn't let the next words out: "Do you ever regret marrying me, with all the financial struggles we've had?"

Kristy looked Ben in the eye. "The financial struggles have been the easiest part," she said. They both laughed. It felt good to both of them to laugh together, with how painful things had been. "None of our struggles have ever made me sorry I chose you. I watch you in the backyard kicking the ball with Trevor. I see you wrestling with Isaac. Little Crystal just can't help herself from jumping into the melee. I'd never trade you in and take a chance on my kids having a different father." Kristy thought for a few moments. "Even the hard stuff we've done together. We're spending our Saturday afternoons fixing the flood damage in the basement because we can't afford to hire it out, listening to the oldies station and CDs no one else would like but us. The funny thing is, that time together is precious to me. It's just the two of us working. I wouldn't have it any other way. I cherish all my memories of times like that with you." Ben felt as if she was looking straight into his soul now. "I love you, Ben. I love that you're willing to work so hard doing stuff you don't really like to support our family. I don't want any other man. I want you, which is why it hurts when I'm afraid that you don't desire me. When I worry about your attractions to other women or sense you're hiding something, I feel so unsure, and I want so badly to know I can trust you and feel secure in your love."

"Look what I've done to you," Ben said. Looking into his eyes, Kristy knew that he had really heard her, was genuinely seeing how much she had been hurting. "I don't want to minimize my sexual problems," Ben said, "because I know they've fueled your insecurity. But I do want you to know that my struggles are my struggles; they have nothing to do with your attractiveness or desirability. Everything I've done so far in my recovery, and everything I'll do in the future, I'm doing because I want to be—I want to become—the kind of man you can count on, that you can put all your trust in. That is who I want to be. I know these are just words, but I'm going to keep doing whatever I need to do for the rest of my life to show you that I mean what

I'm saying."

These types of heart-to-heart discussions continued to happen with Ben and Kristy. They not only helped their relationship recover but they helped Ben overcome his old pattern. It takes a while for most couples to learn to communicate about their deeper feelings and ask for their needs to be met the way Kristy and Ben did. Each partner's history and insecurities create an entire minefield of other less-helpful reactions that can be set off along the way. As couples keep trying, however, the understanding they develop can change everything. Each is more likely to see the other's deepest, once-obscured needs and become more able to help meet them. As understanding and communication deepen, distress lessens and tensions diffuse. A wife finds it easier to relate to and identify with a husband when he talks about the quieter, more genuine aspects of what's going on inside him. This is the same man whose sexual struggles may have only weeks ago so put her off that she wondered, "What kind of man did I marry?" ...

Pornography can ignite a powerful crisis in a marriage, a crisis that can tear couples apart. Or, if both partners are willing, the struggle can be used as an opportunity to draw together, becoming stronger and more united.

Am I Making Effective Changes to Deal with My Spouse's Addiction?

I am probably not making needed changes if:	I am making effective changes if:
I feel that in some way my spouses addiction is my fault and blame myself for his behavior.	I recognize that pornography addiction is a serious problem and requires hard work to find recovery. However, I do not blame myself for my spouses addiction.
I pretend there isn't a problem, it is already taken care of, or it isn't a big deal.	I require honesty and transparency from the addict and ask him directly when something is bothering me.
I believe whatever the addict tells me, even if my gut tells me something is wrong.	I take responsibility for making positive changes in my life.
I refuse to take responsibility for changing what I can and taking care of myself.	I find help and support from others in dealing with the betrayal and trauma I am experiencing and its impact on me.
I try to deal with my emotions on my own.	I openly share what I think, feel, and am experiencing with appropriate trusted people.
I keep the addiction a secret and fail to seek outside help.	I meet regularly with my ecclesiastical leader.
I think that only the addict needs counseling, not me; or, I fail to do homework and skip sessions.	I work with a therapist who is trained in sexual addiction — whether or not my spouse wants me to.
I make excuses for not attending 12-Step meetings for spouses or, quit going once I feel okay again.	I actively attend 12-Step meetings for spouses and work on my own recovery daily.
I rationalize that I don't really need any guidance.	I find a sponsor and work with her regularly.
I neglect or minimize my needs and wants.	I practice self-care daily.
I bury my emotions, or utilize other addictions such as food or drugs to avoid them.	I allow myself to feel natural emotions, hurt, and anger, and then surrender them to God.
I persist in believing that God doesn't care about me.	I seek to feel God's love for me.
I deny, minimize, rationalize, or blame others to avoid making changes or letting go of resentment.	I work towards forgiving and letting go of the resentment for the hurt which the addicted spouse has caused.
I criticize or blame the addict — rather than set boundaries or make changes to protect myself.	I set and follow boundaries to protect myself from my spouses addictive behavior and from obsessing about his addiction.
I make a quick-fix deal: If the addict says he is sorry, I will just forget it and won't talk about it anymore.	I refuse to accept or enable addict behavior; I look for positive changes — not just promises.
I obsess about what the addict needs to do, rather than work on my own recovery.	I focus on the changes that I can make, rather than on what I think my spouse needs to change.
I choose how to act based on my fear of the addict's reaction, or I respond explosively.	I appropriately share my needs and feelings with the addict instead of worrying about how he might respond.
I set my level of affection based on what my spouse wants rather than on what I need.	I ask for the space, closeness, or help that I need.
I go along with addictive behavior, or tell myself that it is okay — or that it is not really that bad.	I work towards extending trust if my spouse is showing behavior that is deserving of trust.
I use demands, fear, guilt, manipulation, or threats to get what I want or need.	I take care of my personal and family needs.
I do it all myself — even if I'm overwhelmed, and constantly demand perfection from myself.	I set small measurable goals for myself and work for progress — not perfection.
I do not put in the time and effort to deal with the problem, or fail to set realistic expectations.	I accept that healing from the effects of my spouse's addiction is a long process that will take time and effort.

Virtual Reality, Actual Risks

Seven ways to guard against inappropriate online relationships.

*Couples may find great benefit to reading
this article together with your spouse.*

Her story followed a familiar pattern. She had reconnected with an old flame on a social networking site.

“Started e-mailing each other once a week,” my friend said to me. “Then twice, then every day. Now I find myself obsessed with what I am going to write to him. I reread things he writes to me. I know what you are probably going to say, but I don’t want to give up his friendship. It is what I live for right now.”

Then came her questions. “Do you think I have a problem? Do you think I should tell my husband? What do you think I should do?”

After asking a few questions, I found that her experience was nearly identical to what mine had been. She was caught up in the excitement of a new relationship, and she spent the majority of her free time developing it. She hid her new friendship from her husband.

The emotional energy that she was putting into the new relationship should have been invested in her marriage. What at first seemed an innocent renewal of an old acquaintance had crossed dangerous boundaries, and she was unaware (or refused to see) that she was involved in an emotional relationship that could easily turn into a physical affair. It was something I had let happen to me, and I feared she was on the same path.

Based on my own experience, I have identified seven early warning signs that you are involved in an inappropriate online relationship.

1. You are withdrawing from your spouse.

Maintaining a healthy marriage takes effort, and I’ve learned that when either spouse stops taking care of the marriage, it is in danger. In my situation, my husband and I had created a marriage where we were dependent on each other to feel good about ourselves. When raising children and dealing with financial insecurity put pressure on our marriage, it stopped feeling good, and we invested less in each other. When we talked, it was mainly about daily logistics— not our feelings, thoughts, or interests. There was little money for dating . . .

2. You are hiding communications with your friend from your spouse.

If you feel you need to keep the relationship a secret, it's inappropriate. I convinced myself that my husband wouldn't be concerned about my communications with another man, but still I didn't tell him. Marvin J. Ashton (1915-1994) [from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] warned: "No [person] will ever be totally free who is living a lie. . . . We should ever bear in mind that a wrong isn't right just because many people do it. A wrong deed isn't right just because it hasn't become visible."

3. You are preoccupied with and daydream about your friend.

Even if you don't have a physical relationship with your online friend, your thoughts can reveal that the relationship is inappropriate. I asked my friend how much time she spends online writing to the other person. Then I asked her how much time she spends thinking about what she is going to write to the other person. The way we spend our mental energy is an indicator of our true focus.

4. You are sharing your thoughts, feelings, and problems with your online friend instead of your spouse.

Such emotional relationships damage marriages. After some years of not communicating effectively, my husband and I grew apathetic about changing our patterns. Sharing my thoughts, feelings, and ideas with a different person simply seemed easier. This was a grave mistake.

5. Your online friend seems to understand you better than your spouse does. You find yourself anticipating when you can communicate or be with your online friend again.

I know of people who organize their day around the time they will communicate with their new online friend. For some, they have become so dependent on the way they feel and represent themselves online that it has become the highlight of their day.

I've learned that as exciting and promising as a new relationship may seem, its true destructive nature is inevitably revealed in time . . .

6. You are not interested in being close to your spouse, emotionally or physically.

Emotional closeness is as important to a marriage as physical intimacy. When a person loses interest in being close to a spouse—emotionally or physically—that person may make the mistake of looking elsewhere for that closeness.

7. When confronted about having feelings toward someone other than your spouse, you justify your actions to yourself and others.

Husbands and wives do have positive relationships with members of the opposite sex. Friendships are important at all stages of life. However, this fact is often used to rationalize inappropriate behavior . . .

I don't know . . . who intends to turn a friendship into an extramarital affair. I know I never imagined such devastation. But emotional affairs are affairs, and they damage relationships, even when they don't involve sexual infidelity. . . Emotional attachment to someone who is not our spouse makes it impossible to love our spouse . . . The resulting heartache and feelings of betrayal are difficult to imagine when such relationships begin, but they can be devastating.

8. Ending an Improper Relationship

My advice to my friend was simple: end it. End the online friendship, no matter how awkward or difficult. Tell your spouse . . . Develop a pattern of happiness that is not dependent on others. Recognize that secret actions have consequences, and those who develop online friendships will most likely come to experience regret, pain, confusion, and shame . . .

Protecting Children From Pornography



The following are Acton Items if your child is involved in pornography:

- Implement the *Family Safety Checklist* found at the front of this packet
- Avoid responding with shock or anger. Instead, be genuinely concerned and talk with the child in a respectful way
- Ask how the problem began, how long it has been going on, and how extensively the child is involved with pornography
- Find out how the child feels about his or her involvement and whether he or she plans to continue that involvement
- Teach your child about the dangers of pornography

Does My Child Have a Pornography Problem?

It is not always easy to recognize the warning signs that a child may be viewing pornography or involved in other compulsive sexual behaviors. It is wise to know some of the warning signs, but remember that there may be other reasons for your child's behavioral changes that are unrelated to pornography use . . . What do you know and what have you observed about your child's behaviors?

Physical Behaviors

- Does your child spend time on the computer after everyone else is in bed?
- Is your child spending more and more time on the computer?
- Does your child quickly change the computer screen or turn off the computer when you walk by or enter the room?
- Does your child have a lot of unaccounted-for time?
- Does your child seem tired or worn out?
- When you ask your child about being tired or worn out, what is the response?

Emotional Behaviors

- Keep in mind that some of these emotional behaviors may be just a normal stage of life, particularly with adolescents.
- Is your child more withdrawn?
- Does your child seem emotionally disconnected?
- Does your child spend less time with the family?
- Is your child more irritable and “on the edge”?
- Does your child become angry over little things?
- Does your child blame others for what is going wrong?

Try to make a distinction between what you assume is going on with your child and whether or not there is pornography use. What is the evidence? Are there unusual phone bills, Internet sites, website addresses, e-mails, or phone calls from third parties? Have you found printed material that is pornographic? Has he or she confessed? If the preceding questions or your intuitions leave you feeling concerned, try talking to your child about your concerns.

Responding to a Child's Pornography Use

Parents may wonder how best to respond upon learning that a son or daughter is involved with pornography. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Avoid responding with shock or anger. Instead, be genuinely concerned and talk with the child in a respectful way.
- Express your love and your desire for your child to have a happy, successful life.
- Ask how the problem began, how long it has been going on, and how extensively the child is involved with pornography.
- Find out how the child feels about his or her involvement and whether he or she plans to continue that involvement.
- Avoid preaching, threatening, or condemning. Rather, appeal to your child's better judgment.
- Teach your child about the dangers of pornography—how it distorts sexuality, causes users to view others as sexual objects, leads to various forms of immorality, and addicts its users.
- Share your concern that involvement in pornography can jeopardize your child's future happiness and eternal well-being and cause spiritual death and eternal disappointment.
- Encourage your child to talk with the bishop and to get professional help if needed.
- Provide help and encouragement as the child strives to overcome the problem.
- Once the problem has been brought into the open, keep the lines of communication open. Sexual transgressions thrive in secrecy but are less likely to recur when talked about in a sensitive, caring way.

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